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Street Children and Philanthropy

in the second half of the

Nineteenth Century

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Abstract

From the middle of the nineteenth century there was a sudden increase of concern over, and care for, children who lived wild on the streets of Victorian Britain. Often described as ‘city arabs’, the racial rhetoric used in connection with these children portrayed them as belonging to another race. The Victorian public did not understand them because they did not conform to the standards of middle-class society. They were also described as vermin and rubbish that nobody wanted.

Although already a feature of the city streets for many years, from mid-century a significant number of philanthropists set about changing their downward life cycle. Instead of merely being punished for vagrancy or imprisoned for theft, their well being became important. Homes were opened where such children could experience a caring home-life. Education and training was given and help finding employment. Some were taken to the countryside, where they would be away from the temptations of the city. Many were taken to Canada to find homes and work there.

The early chapters of the thesis describe the background of the problem and locate the thesis within the context of recent scholarship. Five specific organisations and their founders are examined in depth, in each case using sources not previously studied. The different systems of care and the motivation of the child savers are compared. The thesis will argue that one of the most important reasons for the changes in attitudes to ‘street children’ was the increasing influence of evangelicalism – an influence that can be seen clearly in the series of case-studies.

Acknowledgments

I am greatly indebted to Professor Susan Mumm, who for five years was my internal supervisor and latterly my external supervisor. I wish to thank her for her help, guidance, wisdom and encouragement through every stage of the research and writing up of this thesis. I am also very indebted to Gerald Parsons, who for the past year has been my internal supervisor. His support, guidance and wise comments through the closing stages of my work have been invaluable

I would also like to thank the archivists at the various archives visited for their help. Especial thanks go to Adrian Allen at the University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives; and Carol Roper at the Catholic Children's Society, Westminster. Another source of help, in the provision of old, fairly rare books, came from Sister Eluned Williams of the National Children's Home, and to her I give my sincere thanks.

Without the help of Rev Godfrey Nicholson, who gallantly proof read my thesis, many commas and apostrophes would probably have been misplaced. My thanks go to him for this and for his help with things theological.

Lastly and by no means least I wish to give my everlasting gratitude to my family for their support and encouragement without which this could never have been completed. To my Mother who has always been there to encourage her family in their endeavours. To my sons Ian and Andrew for their technical help with the intricacies of the computer. Finally to my husband John who has been there alongside me every step of the way.

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Chapter 1

Review of Current Literature

In this thesis my objective is to give a detailed comparative study of five of the institutions, or children's homes, which began in the second half of the nineteenth century to care for the growing number of destitute children. I will also investigate the life and work of the philanthropists whose effort and dedication brought about a radical change in the lives of so many children. I will show that the most significant motivation, for the number of children's homes coming into being at this time, came from the increase and development of evangelicalism. The lifestyle, beliefs and ethos of evangelical Christians permeated and shaped many areas of society not least in the field of social work.

The homes studied in detail are The Children's Home (later renamed the National Children's Home), The Catholic Child Care Agencies, Sharman's Homes, and the homes and emigration schemes run by Maria Rye and Annie Macpherson. These five are examples of the large number of such institutions which began at the time, and of the philanthropic activity which surrounded them. I have concentrated, in this thesis, on the problems of homelessness and poverty experienced in London, and analysed the solutions suggested by reformers. However, it must be realised that many other large cities had the same problem, and people there were addressing it in much the same way

The history of each of the organisations detailed in my research has already been written to a lesser or greater degree. However a comprehensive comparative study has not been produced before. This study aims to fill that gap. I have looked at the reasons why both men and women of different Christian denominations, all within the space of a few years, began working in this area. I studied the cause of the problem; then analysed the impact of the introduction of so much philanthropy focused on so many destitute children. I have compared the various schemes and sought to ascertain what resulted from them. I have asked whether the men and women involved achieved the goals they set out to gain. On the other side of the coin, I have asked whether there was a significant improvement in the lives and living conditions of the children.

On reading the books about individual children's homes one is soon struck by the fact that the biographers all assumed that their own particular society was unique in the field of child-care. The methods of care, the educational opportunities and the training schemes were all considered to be exclusive to them. The founders are all shown to be pioneers, which indeed they were. However not one single one was on their own leading the way. The philanthropic activity appeared to be in evidence in many places at the same time addressing the same problem of homeless children. Each organisation was attempting to remedy the hardship and give to the children the kind of home-life they had never known. Over a period of ten years, 1859 to 1869, the homes that I have researched all came into being. I will aim to show instances of similarity and difference in ethos and practice. I will also be discussing the timing of this explosion of care, and seeking to establish how and why it happened. Destitution, it must be realised, had been around for many years, as had the street children.

The study of the culture the nineteenth century, as in any century, is a complex affair with many strands intertwining. To form a viable picture the strands need to be teased out, whilst at the same time viewing it as a whole. Sir Llewellyn Woodward, in the series *The Oxford History of England* (1962), gives an overall picture of the social and political life of the nineteenth century.¹ Published in 1979, *Mid-Victorian Britain* by Geoffrey Best, is a good source for statistics giving detailed analysis of the growth of the cities²; the various occupations of the Victorian populace; wages earned; numbers unemployed; and many more such columns of statistical evidence.³ These, and other such books, give a wide-ranging view of nineteenth century Britain. There have also been a number of studies specific to some of the agencies set up to manage various problems which arose. For example, Felix Driver analyses the workhouse system in *Power and Pauperism: the Workhouse system 1834-1884* (1993),⁴ whilst Jane Lewis looked at the work of the Charity Organisation Society in *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain* (1995)⁵. This organisation was set up to try to control and organise the various individual charities that were springing up everywhere.

The nineteenth century saw many acts passed by Parliament aimed specifically at helping children. Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, who contributed to the series *Studies in Social History* (1973), discuss all the acts passed from Tudor times through to the 1948 Children Act. They put forward the theory that in the past children were

¹ Llewellyn Woodward, *The Oxford History of England: The Age of Reform 1815-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

² Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (London: Fontana, 1989), pp.23-29.

³ Best, pp. 98-130.

⁴ Felix Driver, *Power and Pauperism: the Workhouse system 1834-1884* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

⁵ Jane Lewis, *The Voluntary Sector, the State and Social Work in Britain: The Charity Organisation Society/Family Welfare Association since 1869* (Aldershot: Elgar, c1995).

viewed as being miniature adults. They wore the same kind of dress as their parents, so showing their social status, and poor children worked the same long hours as their parents.⁶ The authors trace the changes in attitude through time to the more modern era. Pinchbeck and Hewitt detail the various methods of dealing with juvenile offenders and the setting up of industrial schools and separate prisons for child criminals. They also analyse the acts brought into being intended to safeguard children in the working environment. They demonstrate that from the eighteenth century concern had been shown about the number of destitute children and the fact that destitution and criminality were believed to be linked.⁷ The theory is put forward that during the nineteenth century the mood of the country was changing from punishing the young offenders to finding ways of preventing crime.⁸ The change in the poor law as it affected children is discussed and the efforts made by the workhouses to give the children an education which would fit them for future life. The work of the voluntary societies is only mentioned briefly using Dr. Barnardo as an example. One aspect which is dealt with in some detail is the emigration to Canada of pauper children under the auspices of Rye and Macpherson. The problems encountered as the societies grew are contrasted with the emigration scheme run by Dr. Barnardo's organisation. This latter scheme is depicted as almost perfect by comparison. Unfortunately this is not an entirely accurate representation of any of the three schemes. Neither does the book even briefly mention the other organisations which were involved in this field.

⁶ Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society Volume 2: From the Eighteenth Century to the Children Act 1948* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969-73), p.348.

⁷ Pinchbeck and Hewitt, p.496.

⁸ Pinchbeck and Hewitt, p.489.

The nineteenth century was in many ways a century of sharp contrasts. Great wealth and extreme poverty lived side by side. Gertrude Himmelfarb in *The Idea of Poverty: England in the early Industrial Age* (1984), explains in detail the term ‘ragged’ as it applied to the lives and people in the poorest strata of the population. She examines the perception of this class, as held by contemporary society. She discusses the founding of Ragged Schools and differentiates between the terms ‘ragged classes’ and ‘dangerous classes’. This she does by using Mary Carpenter’s theory which suggests that the former were poor but not necessarily dishonest, and the latter, those who lived by crime.⁹ Himmelfarb argues that during the period there was a change in the way that poverty was perceived. She proposes that instead of poverty being seen as a natural but unfortunate fact, people began to view it as a pressing social dilemma which must be eradicated. In Himmelfarb’s further writing, *Poverty and Compassion: the Moral Imagination of the late Victorians* (1991), she discusses the beginning of the Salvation Army and also Dr. Barnardo’s Home. In the nineteenth century, the Salvation Army was involved in helping families to leave behind a life of crime in the cities. They believed that people could start a new wholesome life – as it was perceived – in the countryside and eventually in another country. The benefits of living in the countryside as opposed to the city was a commonly held conviction and it will be noted that all of the philanthropists followed this route to a lesser or greater degree. The only child-care organisation discussed in detail by Himmelfarb is Dr Barnardo’s. She describes some of the problems inherent in the scheme and seems surprised that against all odds it survived at the time and through to the modern day.¹⁰

⁹ Mary Carpenter (1807-77) was active in pressing for reform in the treatment of juvenile offenders. She published her ideas in essay and book form, *Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes, and for Juvenile Offenders*, (1851) and *Juvenile Delinquents, their Condition and Treatment*, (1853). She also opened reformatories for both boys and girls.

¹⁰ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion: The Moral Imagination of the late Victorians* (New York: Knopf, 1991) pp.230-234.

The poverty experienced by so many people affected not only adults but children too. Thousands were living on the streets and Elaine Hadley, in 'Natives in a strange land'¹¹ (1990), discusses the racial rhetoric used to describe these destitute children. She further proposes that all destitute children were believed to be 'on the verge of plummeting ... into the depths of criminality'¹²; little distinction being made between poverty and criminality. She touches on the case of a child emigrant to The Cape of Good Hope who stated that he lived with the slaves and that no distinction was made in their treatment.¹³ The racial expressions used when describing the street children is a common theme in many writings of both primary and secondary sources. This often repeated claim is made clear by the tangible example in this article.

The subject of child labour as slavery is dealt with in some detail by Hugh Cunningham, *Children of the Poor* (1991). He discusses the representations of childhood; what constituted a 'proper childhood'; and how ideas on these subjects have changed from the seventeenth century to the present day.¹⁴ He proposes that the discourses surrounding the street child used the analogy of a savage from just before the middle of the nineteenth century.¹⁵ He states that evidence points to the fact that the street children were considered to be 'alien beings', of another race, 'the other'.¹⁶ Cunningham analyses the perceptions of the 'waifs and strays' and discusses the contemporary belief that life in the countryside was better for them than the city streets.¹⁷ He touches on the work of Barnardo, Macpherson, Rudolph and the

¹¹ Elaine Hadley, 'Natives in a strange Land: The Philanthropic Discourse of Juvenile Emigration in Mid-Nineteenth Century England' in *Victorian Studies* (Spring 1990), 411-439.

¹² Hadley, p.423.

¹³ Hadley, pp.412-413.

¹⁴ Hugh Cunningham, *Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.1.

¹⁵ Cunningham, p.97.

¹⁶ Cunningham, p.122.

¹⁷ Cunningham, p.147.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children as examples of the help available.¹⁸

Jeannie Duckworth, in *Fagin's Children: Criminal children in Victorian England* (2002), investigates the problem of criminal children and how they were dealt with. She argues that as the century progressed, education rather than punishment became the order of the day.¹⁹ She deals with why children offended and the various forms of punishment and considers the efforts made to educate them in order that they would be able to live an honest and productive life. In analysing the predicament of the criminal children, Duckworth traces the change in ethos from when the 'children were shackled' in jail to 'the more enlightened times' at the end of the century.²⁰ As has been demonstrated this change in attitude with regard to children has been noted by many historians.

It goes without saying that not everyone who was poor had criminal tendencies although the two were often linked. Pamela Horn analyses many aspects of both working and middle class home life in *The Victorian Town Child* (1997).²¹ She looks at housing, work, schooling, health, philanthropy, leisure, the rescue of children and their reform. She discusses the various agencies set up to protect children towards the end of the century. She also puts forward the view that attitudes towards children changed as the century neared its end.

¹⁸ Cunningham, pp.134–146.

¹⁹ Jeannie Duckworth, *Fagin's Children: Criminal Children in Victorian England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), pp.225–237.

²⁰ Duckworth, p.x.

²¹ Pamela Horn, *The Victorian Town Child* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997).

In contrast to the picture of poverty and destitution there was also a picture of wealth and prosperity in Victorian society. The question of the poverty of so many people became a matter of great concern, and the consequence of this was a huge amount of philanthropic activity. Much of this was connected with the churches and especially those with an evangelical ethos. In *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (1962), Kathleen Heasman puts forward the view that the majority of social work in the area of child-care came under the wing of the evangelicals. She states that it mostly began in the decades immediately after the mid-century. She also proposes that the methods of child-care were very much influenced by the evangelical ethos.²² The book gives an important insight into the viewpoint of evangelicals and their social policy. Ian Bradley, in *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact of the Victorians* (1976), also puts forward the view that many of the most famous acts of philanthropy and the subsequent institutions were brought about by the influence and inspiration of evangelical Christians.²³

F.K. Prochaska writes in detail of the role that women played in philanthropic activities in *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (1980). He maintains that with their ‘genius for fund-raising and organisation women fundamentally altered the shape and the course of philanthropy’.²⁴ The various activities that women instigated and were involved in are discussed. Prochaska

²² Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: An Appraisal of their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (London: Bles, 1962), p.95.

²³ Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact of the Victorians* (London: Cape, 1976), p.123.

²⁴ F.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1980) p.223. [Anne Summers, ‘A Home from Home – Women’s Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century’ in *Fit Work for Women* ed. by S. Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 33-63 (p.33), also argues that this work liberated women and was not just a way of passing time. It enabled women to become involved in areas outside their accepted environment of the home and through this they were also able to learn new skills, although she does not emphasise religious motivation.]

argues that although all Christian denominations believed in the importance of being charitable, none laid more stress on it than the evangelicals.²⁵ Indeed, in a later overview of the history of philanthropy in modern Britain, Prochaska concluded, that because of its concern with ‘the sanctity of family life, social pity and moral fervour’, evangelicalism led to an expansion of opportunities for women in the area of charity and philanthropy.²⁶ For women however, he states that often their philanthropic activity was brought about by a deep need to banish the doubts they had that they were indeed saved. Women, he states, ‘visited the poor not only in anticipation of grace but in fear of damnation’.²⁷ In his essay on ‘Evangelicals and Poverty’ (1995) however, Brian Dickey writes that although it is important to consider this point when investigating the scale of philanthropy that women were involved in, he believes that ‘such self-doubt was not the experience of most evangelicals for whom the doctrine of assurance of salvation was central.’²⁸ In its analysis of the work of Charlotte Sharman, Annie MacPherson and Maria Rye, the present thesis will confirm Prochaska’s view that the interaction between philanthropy and evangelicalism provided important opportunities for women to develop and deploy their organisational skills. In the examples of Sharman and MacPherson particularly, it will also, however, provide support for Dickey’s assertion that self-doubt over salvation was not part of their motivation.

Moreover, recent research on evangelicalism tends to support the view that such philanthropy was prompted by developments within evangelicalism that emphasised

²⁵ Prochaska, p.8.

²⁶ F.K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: philanthropy in modern Britain* (London: Faber, 1988), p.23.

²⁷ Prochaska, p.122.

²⁸ Brian Dickey, ‘“Going about and doing good”: Evangelicals and Poverty c.1815-1870’ in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal* ed. by John Wolffe (London: SPCK, 1995), p.51.

involvement in addressing social problems. In *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989)²⁹ David Bebbington traces the history of evangelicalism from the 1730s to the 1980s, and demonstrates its impact on the British way of life. He also argues that evangelicalism itself changed and developed over this long period in answer to changes in British culture. In his further writing *The Dominance of Evangelicalism* (2005)³⁰, Bebbington deals in more detail with changes in the movement between the years 1850 to 1900. He demonstrates that it was a world-wide movement and argues that although there were many differences in expression and practice, its unity was most striking. He again makes the point that evangelicalism was as much shaping, as being shaped by, the culture of the age. It is interesting to note that the changing attitudes towards children ran parallel to one of the developments in evangelicalism. As the century progressed Bebbington states that the doctrine of the 'incarnation' began to be more prominent in evangelical beliefs whereas in earlier times the doctrine of the 'atonement' had been the foremost teaching.³¹ John Wolffe, meanwhile, sets the scene for Bebbington's analysis in *The expansion of Evangelicalism* (2007).³² He deals with the expansion and spread of evangelicalism between 1790 and 1850. He shows how, through revivals and missions, the evangelical ethos became more widespread and how evangelicals became increasingly involved in social conditions and problems; for example the abolition of slavery and the slave trade.

²⁹ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge 1989).

³⁰ David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005).

³¹ Bebbington, *The dominance of Evangelicalism*, pp.158-159.

³² John Wolffe, *The expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007).

Other views as to the motives of the philanthropists have also been put forward. From the writers of the biographies of these men and women, the motivation is usually depicted as altruistic. It has, however, also been portrayed from a more detached point of view. Harry Hendrick, in *Child Welfare 1872-1989* (1994) and his later edition *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate* (2003), puts forward his theory of the child as both a 'victim' and at the same time a 'threat'.³³ He uses Hannah More as an example of the evangelical viewpoint and as one reason for perceiving the child as 'threat'. He states:

Unsurprisingly, given the evangelical view of children as inherently possessed of Original Sin, believers had little alternative but to view them as being in need of discipline and education in order to provide the necessary salvation, and to protect not only their souls but also Christian society itself.³⁴

Although it is probably true that many people of the time did have this attitude, I hold that there is a danger in supposing everyone had the same standpoint. It is true that child savers were keen to stop the children from becoming involved in criminal activities but this was felt to be the fault of their previous lack of care rather than inherent evil. Hendrick discounts the idea that the various organisations were founded by chance. He gives the impression that there was another agenda, that in many ways it was a 'critique of the Poor Law provision for children'. This is a blanket assumption which may have elements of truth, but it is not supported by some of the facts. As this thesis will show the first instances of rescuing the children were prompted by their desperate situation and in answer to their need.

³³ Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: England 1872 – 1989* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.7-12.

³⁴ Harry Hendrick, *Child Welfare: Historical Dimensions, Contemporary Debate* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2003), p.8.

Seth Koven illuminates another angle in his discussion of the Victorian practice of 'slumming', in *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (2004). He states 'For the better part of the century preceding World War II, Britons went slumming to see for themselves how the poor lived.'³⁵ Koven states that he began by enquiring into 'class-bridging institutions and social welfare programs'. However when researching the lives of many of the people who were working in the area of helping the poor and destitute, he 'found it impossible to keep sex, sexual desire and sexuality out of their story.'³⁶ Koven gives a chapter of the book to Dr Barnardo and what he names as his 'artistic fictions'. The photographs of the ragged children, he states, are erotic images with their bare feet and torn clothing. Much of the argument in this chapter focuses on the court case which Barnardo had to face concerning the complaint that the photographs had been staged. Koven also discusses the fact that complaints of sexual misconduct were made against those running the home. This latter fact was not proved one way or the other but Koven appears to use it as another prop to prove his theory that there was a sexual motive in the arranging of the children's clothing. It is almost like slipping in a remark in a law court which the Judge immediately says is not allowable but which nevertheless has been spoken. Barnardo produced the images of the children to show them as endangered; Koven sees them as sexually endangered a charge which was obviously very real and not only for the girls. However I am far from believing that the people for whom the images were intended would see sexuality in them. They were more likely to see that the danger these children suffered from was poverty, destitution, and criminality.

³⁵ Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.1.

³⁶ Koven, p.4.

Although in all the books and articles mentioned there is peripheral mention of the work done amongst pauper children, there is no detailed analysis and comparison of the phenomenon and its impact upon Victorian Britain. With regard to the various charities and their founders, comprehensive information can be found in the many biographies, books and pamphlets that have been written. Each, however only gives details of their own particular society and its founder.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon has been written about extensively and the biography by Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (1984), gives a concise history.³⁷ Dallimore devotes a short chapter to the founding of Spurgeon's orphanage, but in the main he concentrates on his Christian ministry. Dr Thomas Barnardo has also been written about extensively, the definitive biography being by Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (1979). She gives detailed information of Barnardo's successes and failures as well as his brushes with the law. Wagner discusses some of the other children's homes that were in operation at the same time, but mainly in relation to Barnardo's own attitude to them. He was, she says, 'jealous of his reputation as the champion of the children's cause ...'³⁸ Barnardo, it would appear, always liked to feel he was the forerunner in the field.

The work of another child saver, James Fegan is recorded by W.Y. Fullerton in *J.W.C. Fegan: a Tribute* (c1931). Fullerton marks with respect the other great philanthropists who were engaged in the work of rescuing destitute children, but only goes into detail about Fegan's own work.³⁹ Likewise Alfred Jarvis's book, *Charles*

³⁷ Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1985).

³⁸ Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1980), p.215.

³⁹ W.Y. Fullerton, *J.W.C. Fegan: a tribute* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, c1931), p.10.

Baring Young of Daylesford (1951), gives a detailed account only of the founding of Baring Young's school for boys at Kingham Hill.⁴⁰

There are many books and pamphlets written about the National Children's Home and its founder Dr. Thomas Bowman Stephenson, most of the early ones from people who knew Stephenson and the later ones being promotional material. The latest, by Terry Philpot (1994), details the development of the home, through its 125 year history.⁴¹

The chapters on the early beginnings rely on a book published in 1913 by William Bradfield, *The Life of Thomas Bowman Stephenson*.⁴²

Of Charlotte Sharman's life and work very little has been written in recent times. Marguerite Williams (c1930) compiled her life story using notes she made when in conversation with Sharman shortly before she died. The book *Charlotte Sharman: The Romance of Great Faith* gives an extremely idealised view of her life.⁴³

The Catholic children's orphanages were not founded by one person or organisation. *These My Little Ones*, edited by a Rev Waugh (c.1911), gives an account of the different homes in London and how they came together to form the Crusade of Rescue at the end of the century.⁴⁴ Other information is to be found in biographies of influential Catholic men of the time, for example Cardinal Manning. *Manning's*

⁴⁰ Alfred Jarvis, *Charles Baring Young of Daylesford 1850-1928: His life and work* (Church Book Room Press, c.1950).

⁴¹ Terry Philpot, *Action for Children: The Story of Britain's Foremost Children's Charity* (Oxford: Lion, 1994).

⁴² William Bradfield, *The life of Thomas Bowman Stephenson founder of The Children's Home and of the Wesley Deaconess Institute* (London: Kelly, 1913).

⁴³ Marguerite Williams, *Charlotte Sharman: The Romance of Great Faith* (London: The Religious Tract Society Manchester, c.1930).

⁴⁴ "These My Little Ones": *The Origin, Progress, and Development of the Incorporated Society of the Crusade of Rescue and Homes for Destitute Catholic Children*, ed by Rev. N. Waugh (London: Sands, 1911).

Work for Children: A Second Chapter in Catholic Emancipation (1929), by Edward St. John details the efforts made by Manning to secure Catholic education for every Catholic child.⁴⁵ Sections of the book are reprints of extracts of Manning's pastorals and speeches, and the reaction to them in *The Times* newspaper. This book, whilst giving the account from the Catholic point of view, also gives a good insight into the problems surrounding the emerging and growing Catholic Church in Victorian Britain.

In *Emigration and Empire, The Life of Maria S. Rye* (1999), Marion Diamond traces the life story of Maria Rye and gives a fair and impartial account of her work of emigrating pauper and destitute children to Canada.⁴⁶ Much has been written about Rye in various books concerning the controversy surrounding her emigration arrangements. The motive however in many cases appears to be a desire to demonstrate that the organisation being written about had superior arrangements.

Of Annie Macpherson however, who was also active in this field, the only biography available was written by her niece Lilian M. Birt, *The Children's Home-finder: The story of Annie Macpherson and Louisa Birt* (1913).⁴⁷ As with Williams' biography of Sharman this too is an idealised view of Macpherson's life and work. Although no recent academic work has been written, Project Gutenberg has produced an EBook, *God's Answers: a record of Miss Annie Macpherson's work at the Home of Industry, Spitalfields, London and in Canada* (2004) by Clara M.S. Lowe. Project Gutenberg

⁴⁵ Edward St. John, *Manning's Work for Children: A Second Chapter in Catholic Emancipation* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1929).

⁴⁶ Marion Diamond, *Emigration and Empire: The Life of Maria S. Rye* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999).

⁴⁷ Lilian M. Birt, *The Children's Homefinder: The Story of Annie Macpherson and Louisa Birt* (London: Nisbet, 1913).

states that 'This file was produced from images generously made available by the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions'.⁴⁸ Much of the book is comprised of letters and articles by Annie Macpherson and her friends and associates. Although it does not analyse her life and work it gives very good background information.

Howard Goldstein, *The Home on Gorham Street and the voices of its children* (1996), gives a different perspective on life in a children's home. The home in America was for Jewish orphans and the story is told through their memories. Goldstein shows the children as much shaping their environment as having it shaped by adults. They lived in the world formed for them by adults, but within that organised world there revolved two other worlds; that of sharing with non-family members and needing to fit in; and the private, solitary world personal to the child.⁴⁹ The narrative gives an interesting view from the perspective of the child, detailing how they felt growing up in an orphanage.

One of the considerable areas of work by the philanthropists was the emigration of children to Canada in search of employment and a better life for them. During recent years there has been an upsurge of interest in this area and especially in the descendants of the 'home children', as they have come to be called. In 'Children as Ancestors: Child Migrants and identity in Canada', Stephen Constantine details the changes in attitude of the countries of origin and destination, and those of the home children and their descendants. He maintains they were originally portrayed as the

⁴⁸ Clara Lowe, *God's Answers: A Record of Miss Annie Macpherson's Work at the Home of Industry, Spitalfields, London and in Canada* (The Project Gutenberg Ebook 2003 gods10.txt), p.82
<<http://gutenberg.org/catalog/>> etext 6713.

⁴⁹ Howard Goldstein, *The Home on Gorham Street and the voices of its children* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1996), p.97.

‘deprived or depraved’ by the societies responsible for emigrating them and they were seen as ‘infectious, to be quarantined and excluded’ by the host country. However Constantine argues that more recently ‘they have been reconstructed, their suffering revealed but their positive contribution to society asserted.’⁵⁰ Instead of being ashamed of their origins, he contends that many ‘home children’ are beginning to realise that they were victims of policies they were powerless to change, and a feeling of pride in overcoming many disadvantages is replacing the shame. Constantine deals with the subject with perception and insight. In a short article he opens the subject, giving the reader much food for thought whilst at the same time giving the researcher points of reference. On the same subject, Andrew Morrison has researched the issue of the ‘home children’ in detail in his thesis, ‘Thy children own their birth’ (2006).⁵¹ He interviewed many descendants and through this has been able to get an insight into their experiences and attitudes. Much of what he has discovered agrees with the reading that Constantine puts forward.

The prospect of a better life, with food to eat and money to be earned from working, was the carrot held out to many destitute people, young and old. Thomas Jordan discusses this aspect in an article “Stay and Starve, or Go and Prosper!” (1985).⁵² He analyses the motives and reasons for emigration and gives statistical evidence relating to the various destinations. Although there were some mid-to-late teenage young people, many were younger children who would have little understanding of where they were going.

⁵⁰ Stephen Constantine, ‘Children as Ancestors: Child Migrants and identity in Canada’ in *The British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 16 no.1 (2003), 150–159.

⁵¹ Andrew N. Morrison, ‘Thy children own their birth: diasporic genealogies and the descendants of Canada’s Home Children (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2006).

⁵² Thomas E. Jordan, “Stay and Starve, or Go and Prosper!” Juvenile Emigration from Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century’ in *Social Science History*, 9 no.2 (Spring 1985), 145–166.

Alan McClelland gives a brief history of the Catholic involvement in child migration in an article 'The making of young Imperialists' published in 1989.⁵³ The article is a tribute to the life of Rev. Thomas Seddon who for over thirty years had oversight of much of the work done by the Catholic Church concerning the care of children.

McClelland briefly traces the early work in England and continues to the emigration programme. He discusses the controversy surrounding the schemes run by Rye and Macpherson and identifies their weaknesses. Father Seddon's approach is shown to be the ideal. However, all of the agencies were sure that they had got it right by comparison to others.

There is also much written from the Canadian point of view, examining the impact on the country of such a large influx of immigrants. Kenneth Bagnell, in *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans who came to Canada* (1980), explains the reasons for much of the unease as the century progressed. He analyses the report by Andrew Doyle, who was commissioned by the British Government to investigate the various schemes involved in emigrating pauper children. From his text it is evident he is in sympathy with Doyle and agrees with his reading of Maria Rye's character. He writes that she was a domineering woman who 'brook no interference'⁵⁴ and he gives the impression that he did not think her a sympathetic person when dealing with the children.⁵⁵ Dr Barnardo is the philanthropist he uses as his main example, and although he highlights flaws in the system it is evident he has an admiration for Barnardo as a man, for the work he undertook and for his drive and foresight.

⁵³ Alan V. McClelland, 'The Making of Young Imperialists: Rev. Thomas Seddon, Lord Archibald Douglas and the Resettling of British Catholic Orphans in Canada' in *Recusant History*: 19 no.4 (1989), 509–529.

⁵⁴ Kenneth Bagnell, *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans who came to Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980), p.32.

⁵⁵ Bagnell, p.35.

Published in 1981, Andrew Jones and Leonard Rutman wrote of the work of J.J. Kelso (1864-1935), *In the Children's Aid: J.J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario*. Kelso had been born in Ireland to a wealthy family who, when financial disaster struck, had emigrated to Canada when Kelso was ten years old. In 1893 when the Children's Protection Act was passed Kelso was appointed by the Canadian Government as Superintendent with the responsibility of setting up Children's Aid Societies. Through this work with disadvantaged children he was brought into contact with the organisations bringing children to Canada. Jones and Rutman discuss the report by Doyle and state that the Canadian authorities challenged his criticism of the schemes. They go on to show the changing attitudes found in Canada, from at first regarding the children as a valuable help on the farms to later showing concern about the young immigrants becoming criminals. Jones and Rutman then discuss Kelso's own change of heart from initial opposition, to support for the schemes, and his concern that the immigrant children be adequately supervised.⁵⁶

An article by Charlotte Neff 'Pauper Apprenticeship in Early Nineteenth Century Ontario'⁵⁷ outlines the laws in place to provide for orphaned and abandoned children in the province of Ontario. She also outlines the origins and nature of the apprenticeships as they were used for Canadian children. Mention is made of the British immigrants who were apprenticed. Although this aspect is not dealt with in any detail, she does state 'Such emigration had been promoted as a means of providing for – and ridding the country of – pauper and delinquent children ...'⁵⁸

This is quite a telling phrase, perhaps saying something about the feelings of at least

⁵⁶ Andrew Jones, and Leonard Rutman, *In the Children's Aid: J. J. Kelso and Child Welfare in Ontario* (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, c1981), p.92.

⁵⁷ Charlotte Neff, 'Pauper Apprenticeship in Early Nineteenth Century Ontario' in *Journal of Family History* 21 no.2 (April 1996), 144–171.

⁵⁸ Neff, p.153.

the writer; if not a more general feeling of dissatisfaction at the transferring of perceived 'delinquent' children from one country to another.

Marjorie Kohli in *The Golden Bridge: Young Immigrants to Canada*, (2003), states that she has not attempted to 'analyse the pros and cons of child emigration or its effects on the child'. Instead she has written a 'history of the immigration of young people to Canada' which is, she believes, 'a much neglected part of Canadian History'.⁵⁹ Kohli highlights the fact that even though there was often a stigma attached to the children, this was through no fault of their own. Rather it arose, she believes, 'from the ignorance of the Canadian population of the time.'⁶⁰ Kohli gives a snapshot view of the various agencies involved in the immigration schemes. The report by Doyle is discussed at length as is the controversy it caused both in England and in Canada.

Finally it is interesting to have evidence of how this policy affected the children and their descendants. Phyllis Harrison has edited a compilation of letters from descendants and the relatives of descendants of immigrants to Canada in, *The Home Children: Their personal Stories* (1979). The stories revealed are very moving but two things which shine through are courage, and a stubborn insistence to succeed. 'I think we boys made good Canadian citizens' said one correspondent.⁶¹ Another trait which is revealed is loneliness. Children missed their families and many did not know why they were sent so far away. This book is an invaluable source of memory – stories which no one else can tell and it adds much to the bare bones of the record

⁵⁹ Marjorie Kohli, *The Golden Bridge: Young Immigrants to Canada, 1833 – 1939* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 2003), p.xvi.

⁶⁰ Kohli, p.xvii.

⁶¹ *The Home Children: their personal stories*, ed by Phyllis Harrison (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Watson and Dwyer, 1979), p.166.

books. Unfortunately there are not many letters from people or the families of those who went before the turn of the twentieth century. The letters do however give an intimate insight into life for the 'home children', and as with Goldstein's book, show the world from their point of view.

To reiterate my initial comments, there are many sources of information and papers written which specialise in one or other area of social work. However, there are none which give a detailed comparative analysis, of the huge amount of philanthropic care poured out on the destitute children of Victorian Britain. The following chapters of this thesis will begin to address this gap.

Chapter 2

Poverty a 'Glaring National Disgrace'¹

The nineteenth century saw a huge growth in the population of Great Britain. Census figures show that in 1811 the population was almost 12,000,000; it rose to just under 21,000,000 by 1851 and to almost 37,000,000 by 1901.² The reason for this increase is not altogether clear. Various ideas have been put forward; larger families; more children surviving infancy; people living longer; immigration, especially large numbers of immigrants coming from Ireland. Geoffrey Best (1971) puts the increase down to “‘natural’ means – sheer excess of births over deaths”.³ Llewellyn Woodward (1938) however stated that this fact only accounts for a small part of the increase. He believes that better health care was a more positive factor. He also stated that the ‘causes were not clear to contemporaries’ and that they are still in doubt.⁴ Whatever the reason, the fact remains that by the end of the century there were three times more people living in Britain than at the beginning.

Although the population of the country as a whole was rising at an unprecedented rate, that of the towns and cities was increasing faster still. Best states that during the period of his investigation, London was the largest city in the western world. He gives census figures showing a population increase of 21% in the decade 1841-1851

¹ Some of the material in this chapter has also appeared in an article for the Church of England Children's Society web site <<http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/articles/index.html>>, Barbara Daniels, 'Poverty and Families in the Victorian Era' (2003) [accessed 26 June 2007].

² 'Gendocs: Genealogical Research in England and Wales' Population of Great Britain & Ireland 1570-1931, <<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/hitch/gendocs/pop.html>> [accessed 26 June 2007].

³ Geoffrey Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75* (London: Fontana, 1989), p.31.

⁴ Sir Llewellyn Woodward, *The Oxford History of England: The Age of Reform 1815 – 1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), p.1.

and a further 19% increase in the following decade.⁵ This was due to the effects of the industrial revolution; people were moving into the towns and cities in search of employment. The job market in the countryside was fairly static and so with the rise in population, many people could not find work. Employment prospects were therefore thought to be better in the towns; also for many young people it was the call of the unknown, adventure and a better way of life. Best writes:

for girls and women, [there was] a wider choice of marriage partners and a better chance of marriage; for young persons of both sexes the prospect of a more independent and autonomous way of life; for the adventurous and restless of all ages, the legendary lure of city lights; for the troublesome and criminal the city's immemorial anonymity and sanctuary.⁶

All these reasons would have played a part, but many were soon to find that the city's streets were not paved with gold. The sheer number of people, with the same idea, meant that work was often hard to find and wages were low, barely above subsistence level. If work dried up, or was seasonal, men were laid off, and because they had hardly enough to live on when they were in work, they had no savings to fall back on. Accommodation, too, was overcrowded and expensive by comparison with wages earned. The criminal fraternity however were able to find rich pickings and many places to hide from the law in the overcrowded tenements.

Woodward states that in the early years of the nineteenth century a large number of Irish immigrants came to find work in England and Scotland. He goes on to state that 'one third of the 2,000 beggars counted in London in 1815 were Irish.'⁷ This large immigrant population added to the overcrowding especially in the middle of the

⁵ Best, p.25.

⁶ Best, p.29.

⁷ Woodward, pp.2-3.

century when many more Irish immigrants arrived. They came in search of work escaping the potato famine and the prospect of starvation in their own country. Many of them were unskilled; all were destitute and so were willing to work for any wage they could get. Therefore all these factors – population explosion, immigration both foreign and domestic, added up and resulted in a free-for-all for any job available.

The work that children could do was often necessary to help towards the family budget. They worked long hours in dangerous jobs and in difficult situations for a very small wage. For example, there were the climbing boys employed by the chimney sweeps; the little children who could scramble under machinery to retrieve cotton bobbins; boys and girls working down the coalmines, crawling through tunnels too narrow and low to take an adult. On the streets they worked as errand boys and as crossing sweepers, they sold matches, flowers and other cheap goods; most of these latter occupations however, being a form of begging. *The Illustrated London News* published many pictures of children at work and one showed Lord Shaftesbury (1801-1885) visiting a coal mine where a young boy was pulling a coal truck.⁸ As a result of the conditions that Shaftesbury saw, legislation was passed in 1842 banning very young children from working down the mines. For much of the century there were children who were expected to work from as young as five or six years old, especially in the home helping parents with their work. In 1863 a picture was published of a military tailor and his family at work sewing; and in 1871 another one showing a family, in a house in Bow, hard at work making matchboxes. In the latter two

⁸ Christopher Hibbert, *The Illustrated London News: Social History of Victorian Britain* (London: Angus and Robertson, 1977), p.129.

illustrations the careworn faces of the adults and children, the poverty, scantiness of furniture and overcrowded conditions are very apparent.⁹

As the century progressed there were many changes in the law with regard to the education and employment of children, and slowly but surely conditions began to improve for them. Laws were passed which limited the type of work they could do, and the hours they could work. Education for all children, and not just those who could afford to pay for it, was debated and many changes came about in this area. Some of these changes were not popular with the parents or guardians of the children, because the money children could earn or beg was considered essential to the family budget.

Low wages and scarcity of available work meant that people needed to live near to any opportunity for employment. Time taken walking to and from work would extend an already long day beyond endurance. Inevitably the available housing in the city became scarce, and therefore expensive, resulting in extremely overcrowded conditions. Large houses were turned into flats and tenements and often the landlords who owned them, were more concerned with becoming rich than caring for the upkeep or the condition of these dwellings. Entire families lived in one room and sometimes even rented out 'space' in that one room to another family or persons, in order to afford the rent. The overcrowding became worse when some of the slums were cleared to make room for the coming of the railways and the big London stations. The people who had thus been dispossessed had to move into already

⁹ Hibbert, p.132 and 128.

teeming hovels. These tenements, slums, rookeries were only a stone's throw from the large elegant houses of the rich.

Popular contemporary novelists wrote about poverty and social problems as a way of focusing public attention on problematic issues. For example, Charles Dickens, in his novel *Bleak House*, gives this description:

It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people; where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants, who, after establishing their own possession, took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery.¹⁰

Dickens also gives a graphic portrayal of life in the rookeries when he brings Fagin and his den of thieves to our imaginations in the novel *Oliver Twist*.

The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops, but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors.¹¹

Whether it is an exaggerated picture by Dickens, a ploy to thrill and excite his audience and readers, will perhaps become clear when the reports from contemporary journalists are investigated. There were other novelists also writing about the problems of industrialisation, urbanisation, and social injustice, two examples being, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Kingsley.

¹⁰ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Penguin Classics, 1996), p.256.

¹¹ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1992), p.50.

Whereas in previous years, many artists had been commissioned to paint rich people, pastoral landscapes and classical subjects, several were now portraying contemporary life, poor as well as rich, urban as well as pastoral, and also the growing industrial landscapes. For example Sir Luke Fildes' wood engraving *Houseless and Hungry* (1869)¹² and his canvas entitled *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Labour Ward* (1874) show in realistic detail the despair on the faces of the adults and children alike.¹³ Gustav Dore portrayed the working man and the conditions in which he had to work; two examples are *Lambeth Gasworks*¹⁴ and *Mixing the Malt*.¹⁵

These various illustrations of the conditions in which the poor lived and worked were to some extent works of fiction and could be treated as such by their readers and viewers. They could possibly be seen in a romantic way, and not as the stark reality it was for a great number of people. In this way people could shut their eyes to the problem and pretend it was not there. On the other hand, what had to be taken seriously and could not be viewed in a 'romantic' light were the reports and articles by a number of investigative journalists, who made it their remit to discover what was really happening; for example Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* published in 1851, *Ragged London* by John Hollingshead, written in 1861 and James Greenwood *The Seven Curses of London* written in 1869.¹⁶ Rev. Andrew Mearns was also concerned about the social problems and in 1883 published *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*.¹⁷ Mayhew described the situation as a 'national disgrace'¹⁸ and ten

¹² *Houseless and Hungry* wood engraving, 20 x 30 cm, from the *Graphic*, 1869.

¹³ *Applicants for Admission to a Casual Labour Ward*, oil on canvas, 142 x 243 cm, Royal Holloway College, University of London.

¹⁴ *Lambeth Gasworks*, wood engraving from William Blanchard Jerrold, *London: A Pilgrimage*, Grant and Co., 1872.

¹⁵ *Mixing the Malt*, wood engraving as reference 12 above.

¹⁶ James Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London 1869* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

¹⁷ Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1970).

¹⁸ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* Vol.1 (New York: Dover, 1968), p.xvi.

years later Hollingshead used almost the same words when he wrote that the condition in which so many were living was a 'glaring national disgrace'.¹⁹

It does appear that numerous people and various agencies had become, or were becoming, aware of the problem, but the sheer scale of it must have seemed overwhelming. Among the difficulties in dealing with the situation were contemporary attitudes which frequently included the views that: the poor were improvident, they wasted any money they had on drink and gambling; or that God had put people in their place in life and this must not be interfered with because the life after death was more important. As far as the latter comment is concerned, this is clearly demonstrated in one verse of a hymn published in 1848 by Cecil Frances Alexander.

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly,
And order'd their estate.²⁰

Anthony Trollope in *The Prime Minister*, the fifth of the six Palliser novels, depicts a discussion between the Duke of Onmium and Phineas Finn about equality. They are in the Liberal government and the Duke states:

The Conservative who has had any idea of the meaning of the name which he carries, wishes, I suppose, to maintain the differences and the distances which separate the highly placed from their lower brethren. He thinks that God has

¹⁹ John Hollingshead, *Ragged London in 1861* (London: Dent, 1986), preface.

²⁰ *Hymns Ancient and Modern* 1904, number 573 (This was the third verse of the hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful' and was first published in 1848 in *Hymns for little Children*. In modern versions this particular verse is omitted.).

divided the world as he finds it divided, and that he may best do his duty by making the inferior man happy and contented in his position, teaching him that the place which he holds is his by God's ordinance.' [Finn replies] 'And it is so'.²¹

When, in 1861, John Hollingshead spent time exploring the dingy courts and alleyways in the poorer areas of London, much of what he wrote was very descriptive. However, he did make some judgements; he felt that the poor could help themselves more by becoming established before getting married and having children.

Early reckless marriages are contracted ... children are produced without thought, set upon their feet without clothing, taught to walk, turned into the street without food or education, and left to the ragged school, the charitable public, or the devil.²²

Another judgement he made was that the poor did not take out even the simplest form of insurance, and here he did not take into account the sheer impossibility of this for people in poorly paid work. He claimed that there was a lack of 'self reliance' and 'self respect', because the poor had been 'demoralised by too much charity'.²³

Some people believed that the poor had only themselves to blame. They were considered to be imprudent, wasting their money. In 1853 a correspondent who signed him/herself 'S' wrote a letter to *The Times* on the subject of 'Improvvidence' in which he/she gave his/her considered opinion that English people did not know how to save money. He/she said that all classes of society were 'infected by this malady'. S was putting forward the idea of saving for old age and sickness and asserted that

²¹ Anthony Trollope, *The Prime Minister* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.264.

²² Hollingshead, p.121.

²³ Hollingshead, p.121.

everyone could do this. He/she believed that one of the chief areas of waste was ‘a diseased appetite for drink’.²⁴ Presumably the idea being that the money saved by not drinking alcohol would be money that could be saved for old age or sickness.

Unfortunately this was an idealised view; drink was often used to blot out the horrors of everyday living. The money should have been used for food and so was not extra to requirements. The addictive quality of alcohol was probably not understood either.

To summarise it would appear that many people believed that the reason for so much poverty was improvidence. People spent what they had on alcohol, did not save for the future and were made lazy by too much charity. The belief that everyone should be independent was a theme that was always in the forefront of public debates.

However debate is one thing, action is another; as was solving the problem of the appalling poverty and horrendous conditions in which so many people were living.

This, it seems, was the result of the knock-on effect of low wages, high rents and high unemployment. Most importantly, poverty, it must be realised, affected not only the adults but also the children; many of whom were neglected and left to fend for themselves in any way they could.

²⁴ *The Times* 30th December 1853, p.9 col.c.

Chapter 3

The 'City Arabs'¹

By the middle of the nineteenth century homeless, destitute, ragged children had been a feature of the London streets and alleyways for many years. They were, more often than not, referred to as being uncivilised and from other cultures and races; but worse than that, they were sometimes depicted as less than human, as stray dogs or rats.

They were British children who did not conform to perceived patterns of behaviour and therefore they were depicted as 'other', as different. Respectable society feared them because they did not understand why they lived as they did or where they came from. They were lawless and the norms of Victorian society were alien to them.

There were various reasons for the occurrence of destitute children; some were orphaned, many were turned out of home and left to fend for themselves from an early age, and others had run away because of ill treatment. In some ways this is almost understandable; houses were overcrowded and often more than one family lived in a room. Unemployment or low wages when in work, and the consequent lack of food, clothing and warmth did not make for comfortable homes. James Greenwood had reported in 1869,

How the information has been arrived at is more than I can tell; but it is an accepted fact that, daily, winter and summer, within the limits of our vast and wealthy city of London, there wander, destitute of proper guardianship, food,

¹ Some of the material in this chapter has also appeared in articles for the Church of England Children's Society web site <<http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/articles/index.html>>, Barbara Daniels, 'Poverty and Juvenile Crime' and 'Ragged Schools, Industrial Schools and Reformatories' (2003).

clothing, or employment, a *hundred thousand* boys and girls in fair training for the treadmill and the oakum shed.

He referred to the children as ‘strays’ who were found by the police and taken to the workhouse and were subsequently ‘never owned’. They were not even thought of as human beings, the language used suggests stray dogs.² Greenwood also in this one sentence gives a clear indication of the contrast between great wealth and extreme poverty and its effect on the destitute children.

Some of the street children had a home of sorts to go back to, but many lived wherever they could find shelter. One of Gustave Dore’s engravings shows children asleep in the street, their faces prematurely old and careworn.³ Their clothes are scanty and ragged and they huddle together for warmth and comfort; they are dirty and uncared for. The street children existed by begging, sweeping the crossings, selling flowers, blacking boots, stealing and in any way they could. Some children had to take any money they had been able to earn or steal to give to their often drunken parents.

During the course of his research Henry Mayhew interviewed many different kinds of people and he often told their story in what he claimed were their own words, which adds authenticity to the narrative. One girl aged about ten or eleven told how she found little jobs, for example minding someone’s stall or running errands, in order to earn some money. Her mother was dead and her father often spent days in bed drinking. He did not physically ill-treat her but neglected to care for her and for the most part left her to her own devices. She said he sometimes gave her some money

² James Greenwood, *The Seven Curses of London* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), p.3.

³ Jeannie Duckworth, *Fagin’s Children: Criminal children in Victorian England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002), Illustration 3.

for food but more often than not she had to fend for herself. Mayhew wrote that a child 'so neglected' would become so used to fending for herself that she would find it very difficult to 'adapt herself to any other' way of life.⁴

Some of the 'ragged, sickly and ill-fed children,'⁵ who were seen every day by the people of London, slept in lodging houses. Here children could get a bed, or space in a bed, for a few pence a night. Mayhew referred to these places as 'Low Lodging Houses'. They were he wrote 'not only the preparatory school, but the finishing academies for every kind of profligacy and crime'.⁶ The children, wrote Mayhew, had no means of earning a living, nor did they have 'moral superintendence on the part of relatives or neighbours' and so consequently only learnt habits of 'idleness, ignorance, vagrancy, or crime.'⁷ Mayhew uses language here that would not have been understood by the people he was writing about. They would know 'ragged' but not 'preparatory schools' or 'finishing academies'. 'Moral superintendence' too would have little meaning for many, especially those who lived by criminal activity themselves. The use of this language emphasises the huge gulf between what so many people thought of as 'normal' and the reality for the 'sickly, ill-fed' children.

The situation did not go unnoticed, in 1848 Lord Ashley, who later became Lord Shaftesbury, spoke of more than 30,000 'naked, filthy, roaming lawless and deserted children, in and around the metropolis.'⁸ Over twenty years later Thomas Bowman

⁴ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor*, Vol.1.

<<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MayLond.html>> [hereafter etextMayLond] [accessed 28 October 2006] chapter 14 'Of a "neglected" child, a street seller', p.3.

⁵ Mayhew, 'Of the children in Low Lodging Houses' (etextMayLond) chapter 11, p.1.

⁶ Mayhew, 'Of the Low Lodging Houses' (etextMayLond) chapter 13, p.5.

⁷ Mayhew, 'Of the children in Low Lodging Houses' (etextMayLond) chapter 11, p.3.

⁸ Pamela Horn, *The Victorian Town Child* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997), p.183.

Stephenson, who founded the National Children's Home and Thomas Barnardo the founder of Barnardo's became conscious that the state of affairs had not improved. The homeless children were perceived in many different ways. In 1851, the first Recorder of Birmingham, Matthew Davenport Hill wrote, 'by some they are called the Arabs of the streets; by others the outcasts of society; by others again, human vermin'.⁹ Hugh Cunningham, in *Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (1991), puts forward the theory that the use of the words 'City Arab' to describe the children was brought into common usage by both Thomas Guthrie and Lord Shaftesbury.¹⁰ The idea would appear to have come from travel books which described the Bedouins of the desert. The children seemed to have a similar lifestyle, hence the racial rhetoric. Dorothy Stanley, a painter, however, focused on the children's 'resilience and self reliance' saying the ones she met were 'merry, reckless, happy-go-lucky', and she criticised the way some people depicted them as 'pale whining children with sunken eyes, holding up bunches of violets to heedless passers-by'.¹¹

Many of the destitute children lived by stealing, and to the respectable Victorians they must have seemed a very real threat to society. Something had to be done about the problem, not only for the sake of the children, but also to preserve law and order. Greenwood wrote that society need not fear the old person who had lived all his life by crime, he said 'the grave yawns for him'; he needs pity because of 'the awful account he will presently be called on to answer'. However, in the case of juvenile criminals, it was a different matter. He wrote that large numbers of them were 'bred

⁹ Horn, p.181.

¹⁰ Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p.106.

¹¹ Horn, p.184.

and nurtured in it, inheriting it from their parents as certain forms of physical disease are inherited'.¹² However although some parents trained their children in the arts of thieving, many children stole to live. They were hungry so they took anything they could find to keep themselves alive. Greenwood likened the criminal child to a dog, 'The one propensity of his existence is that of the dog – to provide against certain gnawing pains in his belly. If he has another propensity, it is to run away out of dread for consequences, which is dog-like too.'¹³ He wrote of the fear many people had that law and order was at risk because of the number of criminal children. Dickens had voiced the same warning in *Little Dorrit*, (1857). He described the 'miserable children in rags' who were to be seen under the arches of Covent Garden within the sight of the 'richly-dressed ladies and gentlemen' and he gave this warning to those in power; 'look to the rats, young and old, all ye Barnacles, for before God they are eating away our foundations, and will bring the roofs on our heads!'¹⁴

Staying alive was the first priority and if that meant stealing in order to do so, that was the option taken. Imprisonment was accepted as the price to pay for having been caught. One young pickpocket told Mayhew his story – he was an orphan and had been dismissed from the pottery where he worked. He could not obtain another job and after losing some of his few possessions, he met up with a gang of boys in a similar circumstance to himself. He said he was a good pickpocket and that he would rather steal from the rich than the poor because 'they miss it less'. He also said that 'Picking pockets ... is the daringest thing that a boy can do'.¹⁵ So there was the feeling of excitement linked to danger. He had been in prison thirteen times and

¹² Greenwood, pp.81-82.

¹³ Greenwood, p.83.

¹⁴ Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1996), p.158.

¹⁵ *Mayhew's Characters* ed. Peter Quennell (London: Spring, 1967), p.121.

flogged four times. However, this had not taught him the error of his ways. Instead, he said, 'every time I came out harder than I went in'.¹⁶

Many girls drifted into prostitution as a way of earning a living. This would sometimes appear to have been as a last resort, but once in the situation it was hard to get out. A young prostitute spoke of her life to Mayhew and how it was she had ended up in that way. It makes very sad reading with a sense of inevitability about it. She ran away from a cruel mistress and found there were not many honest ways to survive on the streets without money and without the means of earning any. Both these two young people lived in lodging houses. The young prostitute said that they were 'horrid filthy places' full of 'thieves and bad girls'. There were many times when 'a dozen of boys and girls [all mixed] squeedged into one bed'. She would not put into words the bad things that went on, but said she was sorry to say she took part.¹⁷ The young pickpocket also told how bad the conditions were in the lodging houses. He said they were 'very bad places for a boy to be in' and that 'if an innocent boy gets into a lodging house, he'll not be innocent long – he can't'.¹⁸ However he also said that without such places he could not carry on his trade and he would not be able to make a living. The boy's comments bear out the truth of what Mayhew had written about lodging houses.

A child left destitute sometimes became part of a gang of children controlled by an adult. They were taught how to steal and bring the stolen goods back to their 'protector', who then acted as the fence for the stolen property. The young thief was sometimes given a small percentage of the money gained. These protectors were the

¹⁶ Quennell, p.122.

¹⁷ Mayhew, 'Statement of a Prostitute' (etextMayLond) chapter 13, p.3.

¹⁸ Quennell, p.123.

‘Fagin-like’ characters portrayed so graphically by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*. The children often did not know that what they did was wrong. They were destitute of all those things – food, clothing, shelter, security and the care and moral upbringing that children should have as a right. Greenwood wrote:

they have an ingrain (sic) conviction that it is *you* who are wrong, not them.

That you are wrong in the first place in appropriating all the good things the world affords, leaving none for them but what they steal.¹⁹

Then as now, bitter experience will soon teach a child that if he takes something which does not belong to him, and he is caught, he will be punished. He therefore learns cunning rather than honesty. Once a child had started on the criminal ladder peer pressure then kept him there. In prison there was a criminal hierarchy; the young pickpocket said that if you were in prison for begging you would be laughed at ‘Begging! Oh, you cadger!’ so he said that ‘a boy is partly forced to steal for his character’.²⁰

Many things contributed to leading children into criminal ways. Greenwood wrote with great bitterness about the penny novels which were aimed at gullible and vulnerable youngsters. ‘Pernicious Trash’ ‘letter-press offal’ ‘poison pen’orths’ ‘gallows literature’ ‘patch fouler’ were just some of the phrases he used.²¹ He believed no child was safe from their influence because they were to be found everywhere and were easily obtainable. The books, which Greenwood so reviled, glorified the exploits of highwaymen, robbers and cut-throats. Although the characters were shown as vicious, they performed daring acts which would make them seem heroic to an impressionable young mind. Another criticism Greenwood

¹⁹ Greenwood, p.83.

²⁰ Quennell, p.122.

²¹ Greenwood, p.88.

made about the books was their 'lewdness' as the authors described in detail the attractions of, to give an example, 'Starlight Sall' who would appear to have been the mistress of the cut-throat hero. He was concerned about the harmful effect of the 'penny numbers' whose influence reached all levels of society. There were he said 'a quarter of a million ... sold weekly' by 'unscrupulous news-agent[s]'.²² So it would seem that the cheap paper-backs were condemned in the same way that violent video and computer games are condemned today. They were believed to have an unhealthy influence on vulnerable young minds.

Some people thought education was the answer to the problem of the destitute children and in many areas Ragged Schools were set up. However there were dissenting voices against giving the children even a basic education. Some people objected because of the religious content of what was taught. Lord Shaftesbury defended the schools from this, and other attacks, at the second annual meeting of the Ragged School Union. He said it would appear that where there were ragged schools vagrancy had been 'extinguished' and crime 'diminished'.²³ Henry Mayhew was opposed to the schools and disputed this claim. He quoted evidence from the police and employers in the district to show that in many cases crime actually increased. Gertrude Himmelfarb quotes Mayhew as saying that the schools turned out a more sophisticated kind of criminal. He argued:

that neither ragged schools nor any other kind ... could reform children who were unreformable ... Since crime was not caused by illiteracy, it could not be cured by education' and therefore 'the only certain effect being the emergence of a more skilful and sophisticated race of criminals. A knowledge of

²² Greenwood, pp.90-92.

²³ *The Times* 10th June 1846, p.8 col.a.

arithmetic enabled children to steal articles marked at a higher price, and the ability to read made them avid readers of crime stories.²⁴

The first ragged schools were opened in the late eighteenth century. When the Ragged School Union was formed in 1844 with Lord Shaftesbury as its chairman, there were sixteen schools connected with it. By 1861 there were 176 schools in the union. In Scotland the schools provided all-day care including meals for destitute children. In England meals were not provided initially. However, as time went on, many of the schools began to supply food to starving children. With the enormity of the problem becoming clearer, some schools began to stay open as refuges. It leaves one wondering if some children attended the ragged schools in order to be fed and warmed, especially in inclement weather, rather than to get an education.

In the beginning many of the schools were started by the churches and were staffed by volunteers. As time went on paid staff were also employed. Lack of money was a continuing problem and many appeals for grants to Corporations and Parliament were made. One such appeal was put before the Corporation of the City of London in 1846 by Mr Bennock. He wrote of the 'wretched children who belonged to the class from which the prisons are peopled', and he stated that there were '100,000 children under fourteen years of age who were totally destitute of the rudiments of education'. He gave the impression that when he visited the schools the children were eager to learn. He said they 'crowded [there] with eagerness and hope'. By drawing a picture of the hopeless situations from which the children came and following it with a picture of

²⁴ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London: Faber, 1984), pp.376-377.

potential good he gave a compelling argument for the help that was needed.²⁵ Here again the suggestion that poverty and criminality were linked is patently obvious.

Mr Locke of the Ragged School Union also added his voice in calling for more help to keep the schools open. He asked that the Government give more thought to preventing crime rather than punishing the wrongdoers, saying that the latter course only made the young criminals worse. This is a fact born out by the young pickpocket who was interviewed by Mayhew, and who stated he always came out of prison 'harder' than he went in. Locke believed that if the Government gave more money to help the schools this would be a start. He detailed all the achievements of the ragged schools and the difference it had made to the children who attended. They were, he said, taught to read and write and given moral guidance. They were shown how to be careful with their money and some had been found employment. Attached to many of the schools were refuges for the most destitute of children. Although so much was being done there was so much more to be done. Locke said they were certain that there were 'thousands upon thousands [who] roam the streets unheeded and uncared for, to plunder and do mischief'.²⁶ Two days after this letter was published Robert Hanbury who was the treasurer to the Boys' Refuge, Whitechapel wrote to say that when they had applied for a grant to the Council of Education they quickly received one.²⁷ From reading the letters one gets the impression that what Locke was asking for was much more involvement by the Government on a wider scale and not just the odd relatively small grant.

²⁵ *The Times* 24th April 1846, p.6 col.f.

²⁶ *The Times* 24th November 1855, p.4 col.f.

²⁷ *The Times* 26th November 1855, p.7 col.d.

In August 1856 it was reported in *The Times* that ‘the Committee of Council on Education ... agreed to grant substantial and permanent aid to reformatory and ragged schools’. There were of course conditions to be complied with, but grants were to be made to pay for books, other such needs, rents, salaries and other essentials. The article states that the children should be taught to read, write and learn simple arithmetic. They must also be given Christian teaching so that they would learn to live a good and moral life.²⁸ However it would seem that these funds were slow to come through. In 1857 J. Hytche, in a long letter to *The Times*, detailed the large amount of good the ragged schools had achieved, but then said that the work was in danger of collapsing if more financial help was not forthcoming. Again Hytche reiterates what others had said, that it was better to prevent crime than to punish it; that was unless society decided that ‘it is easier to crush evil in the flower than in the germ’. He firmly believed that the ragged schools were the way to prevent crime and he said that the Portland town police record showed that before the ragged school opened in 1849, 239 lads were charged each year and the number was now below fifty.²⁹

In order for the schools to be able to help the destitute and homeless children, it was soon realised that more refuges needed to be opened. This was an enormous drain on scanty resources and many appeals were made for money for this purpose. William Williams not only wrote letters asking for money; he also published lists of those who contributed.³⁰ Hollingshead in his articles entitled ‘London Horrors’ gave many examples of the deprivation suffered by the poor and homeless especially during the extremely cold weather of 1861. The secretary of the George Street Ragged School,

²⁸ *The Times* 4th August 1856, p.10 col.b.

²⁹ *The Times* 20th January 1857, p.12 col.a.

³⁰ *The Times* 28th December 1858, p.10 col b.

Mr Lewis, told him of the 'ragged band' of boys who attended the school. They were, he said, 'in a most distressing state – homeless, hungry, and almost naked'.³¹ Those responsible for the school often paid for homeless boys to stay in lodging houses; and with the bitter weather conditions increasing the problem, they were very worried about turning the boys out without shelter. The ragged school managers were therefore appealing for clothes, equipment and food in order to shelter the homeless ones through the worst of the weather.

As early as 1848 Lord Shaftesbury had put before Parliament a proposal detailing what he believed could be done to solve the problem of the uneducated, lawless children. He spoke at length of his idea to form a plan to 'transplant them at the public expense to Her Majesty's colonies in South Australia'. They were at present he said the 'seed-plot of all the crime in the metropolis' and he stated that if they were left in this condition eventually they would be the cause of 'portentous evil'. He said the children would be 'rescued from vice and degradation' and be enabled to become 'honest men and women and religious Christians'.³² Lord Shaftesbury used the metaphor of plants when he made this appeal and he used the word 'transplantation' each time he mentioned the children being sent to Australia. This again has the effect of de-humanising the children but at least it is a more pleasant analogy than referring to them as animals or human debris. It does however take away their individuality. Lord Shaftesbury brought the matter up again before Parliament in 1849 because he believed it was better to prevent crime than punish it after it had been committed. The children who would benefit from emigration he believed were those who admitted that they had no other means of living other than 'begging or stealing'. The

³¹ John Hollinshead, *Ragged London in 1861* (London: Dent, 1986), p.24.

³² *The Times* 7th June 1848, p.4 col.d.

Government had given the ragged schools a grant in the previous year in order that they could pursue this course of action and Lord Shaftesbury wanted it extended. He met with some opposition and the debate continued.³³ The recurring theme seems to be that crime and destitution were inextricably linked. Repeatedly people were saying that if only the destitute children could be rescued from the streets a large part of the problem of juvenile crime would be solved.

James Greenwood, when he wrote the *Seven Curses of London*, did not believe that the charity organisations were making any impact at all on the number of neglected children. He wrote in 1869 that although statistics show that many children had been rescued from the streets, 'there remains the grim fact that our filthy byways still swarm with these dirty, ragged, disease-stricken little ones, and as plentifully as of yore they infest our highways, an eyesore and a shuddering to all decent beholders.'³⁴ The humanity of the children is again taken away as they are likened to a rat infestation.

Although there were workhouses provided for destitute people, there were numberless children who fell through the net and did not even have this 'care'. Some parents left their children in the workhouse whilst they found work, or relatives left them there when their parents died. However, for the large numbers of children living on the streets this option was not available. Firstly they would not voluntarily enter the workhouse; and secondly the poor law officers were not obliged to go out looking for them. These were the children who were to be looked after by private philanthropy.

³³ *The Times* 25th July 1849, p.4 col.c.

³⁴ Greenwood, p.51.

London was not the only city where the problem of destitute and homeless children was becoming a problem, or at least a more noticeable one. The difference was that, as stated by Best, 'London was the largest city in the Western world'.³⁵ The sheer size of the city by comparison amplified the problem. It would seem that in at least two of the main ports as well as other cities, homeless children were in need of care. Certainly the problem had come to light in Bristol, Liverpool and Birmingham. As stated earlier, Matthew Davenport Hill of Birmingham referred to the homeless children in the city as the 'outcasts of society and human vermin'.³⁶

The Rev. Silas Kitto Hocking served as a Methodist minister for twenty-six years in Liverpool during the latter half of the nineteenth century. He was a prolific writer and in his sermons, lectures and other writings addressed many social problems of the day, one in particular being the welfare of children. One of his most famous stories, *Her Benny* (1879), was based on actual people. Hocking wrote, 'the grouping of the characters that figure in the story is purely fictitious, but not the characters themselves.' He said he knew them well and that his interest in the 'little Arabs' came from having seen them in their own homes 'if such haunts of wretchedness be worthy of that name'.³⁷ Liverpool had the largest workhouse in Britain and also the highest infant mortality rate. As was the case in London, the rich were very rich and the poor very poor.

As well as bringing the matter to the public notice through articles and books, there were many people working practically to ease the situation. Canon Major Lester (1829-1903), who was the vicar of St Mary's, Kirkdale for fifty years set up the Major

³⁵ Best, p.25.

³⁶ Horn, p.181.

³⁷ Silas Hocking, *Her Benny* (Parkgate: Gallery Press, 1968), preface.

Street ragged school and founded the Kirkdale Child Charities.³⁸ Father James Nugent was born in Liverpool and after training for the priesthood returned there to work as a priest. He was appalled by the extreme poverty in which so many were living. He was also very concerned for the thousands of children living on the streets. He opened a ragged school and later a refuge for homeless children.³⁹ These were just some of the people who were caring for the children of Liverpool.

From this evidence it is obvious that many people were concerned and doing something about the predicament the children were in. However, it also seems that the problem was overwhelming and that as soon as some children were helped more were found who appeared to be in even greater need. The fact that destitution and crime were inexorably linked appeared to be clear to everyone. The ragged schools, some with their attached refuges, were working hard to deal with the problem. Many letters were written to the newspapers. People with influence like Lord Shaftesbury put the problem before Parliament and so a public debate was entered into, thus creating a context in which others began to think of founding homes for homeless children.

³⁸ Canon Thomas Major Lester, <<http://www.emanuensis.btinternet.co.uk/lester.htm>> [accessed 25th May 2007].

³⁹ Museum of Liverpool 'Liverpool Lives Father James Nugent', <<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/mol/life/displaylife.asp?id=19>> [accessed 25th May 2007].

Chapter 4

Philanthropy – The answer?

In many ways, the nineteenth century can be called ‘the age of philanthropy’. The philanthropic enterprises which began in the Victorian era were far-reaching and numerous, covering all areas of social work, education and health care. The causes of this phenomenon can be traced to a number of reasons; for example, the old idea of Tory paternalism, with employers caring for those in their employ; or rich industrialists, who wished to be remembered for some great work of charity or educational facility. However, the most important aspect by far was the expansion of evangelicalism within the Christian church.

In 1910 F.W. Cornish wrote ‘Evangelicals are known to the world, not by their writings, which are forgotten, but by their lives, which can never be forgotten.’¹ Evangelicalism, in the nineteenth century, was not associated with any one denomination of the Christian Church. The Church of England, Methodist, Baptist, Brethren, and Congregationalist traditions, all to one degree or another had strong evangelical movements. Quakers, who had always been known for their tradition of ‘Quietism (the supremacy of “The Holy Spirit within””²), also had an evangelical branch. Many influential Quakers were very involved in social work; for example Elizabeth Fry, who in the early part of the nineteenth century pioneered prison reform when she visited and helped women in prison. Four of the philanthropists, who are to

¹ Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact of the Victorians* (London: Cape, 1976) p.15 (Bradley quotes from *History of the English Church in the 19th Century*).

² D. M. Murray-Rust, *Quakers in Brief* chpt 5.

<<http://people.cryst.bbk.ac.uk/~ubcg09q/dmr/chap5.htm>> [accessed 7 October 2006], p.3.

be discussed in the later chapters, were from Methodist, Congregational, Anglican and Quaker traditions respectively.

Kathleen Heasman proposes three reasons for the sudden increase in philanthropic giving: 'a growing awareness of the existence of social problems', 'a deepening sense of guilt at the inequality of wealth and the appalling conditions of an appreciable proportion of the population' and 'the desire for publicity and power'.³ The latter point would be more likely experienced by men than women, and was often connected with the newly rich industrialists who wanted to preserve their name for posterity. Heasman states that 'As the century progressed, social work became much more closely connected with religious beliefs'.⁴ She goes on to say that it would appear that 'three-quarters of the total number of voluntary charitable organisations in the second half of the nineteenth century can be regarded as Evangelical in character and control.'⁵ Ian Bradley also makes this point⁶ and he quotes Lord Shaftesbury, who told his biographer, 'I am essentially and from deep-rooted conviction an Evangelical of the Evangelicals. I have worked with them constantly, and I am satisfied that most of the great philanthropic movements of the century have sprung from them.'⁷

Evangelicalism was a world-wide movement. However, although coming from different backgrounds and traditions, there were common characteristics. Heasman states that the two most important beliefs were, 'Salvation by Faith and the

³ Kathleen Heasman, *Evangelicals in Action: an appraisal of their Social Work in the Victorian Era* (London: Bles, 1962), p.10.

⁴ Heasman, p.11.

⁵ Heasman, p.14.

⁶ Bradley, p.123.

⁷ Bradley, p.119.

Infallibility and over-riding importance of the Scriptures'.⁸ She also proposes that there were two aspects of their contemporary world which evangelicals united against: the growing influence of Roman Catholicism and the theory of evolution. It will be shown that the first of these was a very real concern for more than one of the philanthropists studied. However, David Bebbington (2005) asserts that evangelicalism was as much shaped by, as shaping, contemporary culture and thinking. He states that the theory of evolution, whilst initially being met with 'dismay and disbelief'⁹, slowly, over the second half of the century became gradually assimilated into their thinking. Bebbington puts forward the view that this change came about because 'the era when evangelicals generally thought within a framework inherited from the age of reason was passing, being gradually replaced by a Romantic age of imagination.'¹⁰ The mood of the country, he believes, was moving from the age of reason to the romantic age and this in turn produced change within evangelical thinking.

Bebbington (1989) argues that for all evangelicals of any tradition, the four main characteristics were: 'Conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism.'¹¹

Conversionism – having been converted, the new convert then felt a need to convert others. Activism – the convert's Christian faith needed expression in action, hence the involvement in philanthropic works. Biblicism – the belief that the Bible was the inspired word of God. Crucicentrism – the doctrine of the cross with its message of atonement was central to all their teaching. However, in his detailed study of

⁸ Heasman, p.16.

⁹ David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), p.166.

¹⁰ Bebbington (2005), p.172.

¹¹ D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.4.

evangelicalism in the second half of the nineteenth century, Bebbington (2005) proposes that another change, which gradually entered evangelical thinking, was a 'milder view of the atonement' with the incarnation taking a more central place.¹² This change, I suggest, runs parallel with the changes in attitudes to children which so many historians have noted and which is the subject of this thesis. Bebbington also states that 'the fatherhood of God' came more into 'vogue'¹³ and it will be seen that this outlook is typical of the approach used by both Thomas Stephenson and Charlotte Sharman in their care of the children. Of Sharman it was written in her obituary, 'her simple faith in God's fatherly love pervaded her life and actuated all her doings.'¹⁴

To Bebbington's list John Wolffe (1994) adds another common characteristic, individualism;¹⁵ personal salvation was lived out in personal service. This characteristic gave women the opportunity of serving outside the home setting, a place which many considered to be their natural environment. F.K. Prochaska (1980) states:

a distinctive feature of women's work in nineteenth-century philanthropy is the degree to which they applied their domestic experience and education, the concerns of family and relations, to the world outside the home.¹⁶

It was not considered suitable for women to be involved in commerce or industry, but charitable work was an acceptable occupation for them and, generally, obstacles were not put in their way. Their skills of care and compassion for children, the sick, the aged and the poor could be put to use. However, in so doing, they were able to learn

¹² Bebbington (2005), p.241.

¹³ Bebbington (2005), p.241.

¹⁴ *The Times* Tuesday 10th December 1929, p.18, col.c.

¹⁵ John Wolffe, *Evangelicals, Women and Community in nineteenth century Britain* [Open University Course A425 Study Guide] (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1994), p.19.

¹⁶ K.K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p.7.

new skills as they branched out from the home environment. Women of the leisured classes had for many years, visited the poor on their estates taking food and giving help where needed. This was now taken up in the towns by the newly-rich middle class women whose husbands had acquired their wealth in industry. Women who were able to employ servants were then set free to follow their own pursuits. As will be demonstrated later, it was through visiting the poor in their homes that Annie MacPherson became aware of the children who spent all day making matchboxes. This was the beginning of her work of rescue. Likewise, when visiting poor families, Charlotte Sharman came to realise how intensely, dying mothers dreaded that their children would be taken to the workhouse. This led to the opening of her orphan homes.

Bradley writes, 'It is not hard to see why the Evangelicals' call on the female sex to minister to the poor and needy evoked such a strong response; it solved the problem of the 'surplus' women'. He quotes Wilberforce as saying:

There is no class of persons whose condition has been more improved in my experience than that of unmarried women. Formerly there seemed to be nothing useful in which they could naturally be busy, but now they may always find an object in attending the poor.¹⁷

Anne Summers, however, objects to this attitude. She puts forward the theory that women did not take up visiting the poor because they had nothing else to do, because she says it involved 'a sacrifice of leisure and a development of expertise'.¹⁸ They had to use their time and learn skills they had not had the opportunity to learn before. She goes on to say:

¹⁷ Bradley, p.124.

¹⁸ Anne Summers, 'A Home from Home – Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century' in *Fit Work for Women* ed. by S. Burman (London: Croom Helm, 1979), pp.33-63 (p.33).

We know many Victorian males of the leisured classes took up Parliamentary careers; it has never been suggested that their overriding motive for doing so was one of boredom. It is belittling and insulting to suggest women had only negative motivation.¹⁹

No less than men, women carried out their philanthropic work from a deep sense of commitment. They were personally affected by the need they saw around them.

Many were also living out their own Christian commitment because their individual conversion demanded individual action. On this subject, Prochaska argues that women became involved in charitable work from a deep sense of disquiet over their own status as 'saved'. He states that for many women,

benevolence was not simply, as evangelical doctrine would have it, the natural result of conversion, a product of a true acceptance of the Gospel covenant. It was often a product of that anxiety of soul which asks, am I saved?²⁰

Brian Dickey, however, asserts that 'such self doubt was not the experience of most evangelicals, for whom the doctrine of assurance of salvation was central'.²¹ It was certainly not the experience of Charlotte Sharman and Annie Macpherson, who demonstrated, both by their lives and what they said, their complete assurance of salvation. Speaking of the meetings she helped to arrange for the coprolite diggers, Macpherson said, 'they have heard, on their own village green, a present, free, and

¹⁹ Summers, p.38.

²⁰ Prochaska, p.121.

²¹ Brian Dickey, 'Going about and doing good' Evangelicals and Poverty c.1815-1870' in *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain 1780-1980* ed. by John Wolffe (London: SPCK, 1995)

full salvation.’²² In everything she did in her future life she proved her belief in this statement as it applied to herself.

One area of philanthropy which women made peculiarly their own was raising money for various charities by means of bazaars and fairs. These they organised and ran, and Prochaska maintains that they were both the ‘cause and effect of the expanding influence of women in philanthropy’. He argues that they were an ‘expression of the coming of age of women in philanthropy’.²³ He also maintains that the ‘profession of charity’ enlarged ‘the horizon’s of women’ in the nineteenth century.²⁴ Being involved in philanthropic activities changed the lives of so many women. However, not only were their lives changed, women made their mark as well. Prochaska claims that ‘with a genius for fund-raising and organisation women fundamentally altered the shape and the course of philanthropy’.²⁵

Although very important in the working out of philanthropic ventures, most women were still only allowed to operate in the ‘caring’ areas of the work. This was considered to be an extension to her role within the home, and therefore suitable. Men usually performed the administrative and managerial roles. When Stephenson founded The Children’s Home it was administered by a committee of three men. As the Home grew so did the committee but all the names added were male. However, three women, each of whom will be considered in detail later in this thesis, did become involved in the administration of large enterprises concerned with helping destitute children. Indeed the range of their organisational and administrative roles

²² Clara Lowe, *God’s Answers: A Record of Miss Annie Macpherson’s Work at the Home of Industry, Spitalfields, London and in Canada* (The Project Gutenberg Ebook 2003 godsa 10.txt), p.8.

²³ Prochaska, p.57.

²⁴ Prochaska, p.222.

²⁵ Prochaska, p.223.

went far beyond the arranging of bazaars and fairs. They were Annie Macpherson, Maria Rye and Charlotte Sharman, all evangelical Christians of different denominations working independently of each other, but setting up and heading large organisations.

Some of the most obvious recipients for all the philanthropy being poured out were the poverty stricken slum dwellers. There were many arguments put forward for and against giving help to the poor. It was said it made them lazy and too reliant on charity; why work when someone will give you the means to exist? In 1859 Samuel Smiles published a book called *Self Help* and this epitomised the ideology of the day. It has been said that 'In many Victorian homes, *Self Help* had a status second only to the Bible.'²⁶ Smiles illustrated the self-help ethic by the use of biographies; he showed through the lives of successful people, that hard work and endurance can produce great achievements. He wrote 'Help from without is often enfeebling in its effects, but help from within invariably invigorates.'²⁷ He went on to say:

there is no power of law that can make the idle man industrious, the thriftless provident, or the drunken sober; though every individual can be each and all of these if he will, by the exercise of his own free powers of action and self-denial.²⁸

He believed that it was not laws which needed changing but men who needed encouraging to improve themselves. The book inspired many of the great industrialists for whom the philosophy would appear to have worked. It did not, however, help the vast majority of the poor who were struggling to keep body and

²⁶ 'Self Help Classics', <<http://www.butler-bowdon.com/selfhelp.html>> [accessed 7 October 2006], p.1.

²⁷ Samuel Smiles, from *Self Help* (1859) in *Culture and Society in Britain 1850 – 1890* ed. by J. M. Golby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp.106-112 (p.106).

²⁸ Smiles, p.107.

soul together by working every waking moment and yet not being able to rise any higher. Nor did it help those who were not able to find work.

Another widespread belief was the doctrine of laissez-faire – ‘Government abstention from interference in the actions of individuals especially in commerce’.²⁹ However when members of the Government became involved in social issues a debate was entered into between those who followed the doctrine of laissez-faire and those who leaned towards paternalism. Lord Shaftesbury, an evangelical Christian, gave his time, both in and out of Parliament, working to alleviate social injustices. Bradley stated that it was said of Shaftesbury ‘Almost all his waking hours are given up to philanthropic ventures’. He also contends that Shaftesbury’s ‘greatest achievement was to establish it as a right and duty of the state to interfere in the organisation of industry and commerce to protect the interests of the workers.’³⁰ The laissez-faire doctrine privileged the owners of the factories and the bosses of commerce.

Shaftesbury recognised this fact and worked to protect the most vulnerable members of society, especially children.

There was great pressure in Victorian society to be independent and above all ‘respectable’. Even the poor, it was believed, could achieve this ‘virtue’ if they were industrious, thrifty, sober, honest and morally upright. So how did the ideology of self help and the huge amount of philanthropic giving exist side by side? The evangelicals believed the answer lay in converting the poor to Christianity and teaching them to use what money they had wisely; which usually meant, amongst other things, giving up alcoholic drink. In this way they would then be able to help

²⁹ *The Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), definition.

³⁰ Bradley, p.130.

themselves, live an honest and sober life, and have no further need for philanthropic help. Education was also considered to be very important; evening classes and lectures were arranged in the new age of scientific discovery. Through this, it was believed that the uneducated masses could better themselves and become independent of outside help.

Evangelical Christians believed that the way to salvation was through faith and not through good works. However, philanthropic work was the way in which they showed their faith; it was the way in which they followed the teachings of the Bible to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, tend the sick and visit those in prison.³¹ They had a deep seated need to evangelise and social work gave them many opportunities to do this. It was sin, they believed, that kept the immoral poor in such dire straits.

All these aspects produced the right kind of climate for the charitable activity which abounded in Victorian Britain. The poor were visited and help was given where necessary; more and more ragged schools were started; refuges for homeless children were set up; children's homes for destitute children were founded; hospitals were built; there was reform in the care of the insane; conditions in prisons were improved; there was reform in the working practices in factories; and many more humanitarian projects begun and some carried through. The people who could not help physically gave money to finance the projects and appeals for this could be found daily in the newspapers. There was also a realisation that if the children of the poor were to have an improved standard of living then the parents had to be reached. Consequently a number of 'Ragged Churches' were opened for those who were too dirty and ragged

³¹ *The Bible*, Matthew 25, vs.35-36.

to attend conventional churches. These started in Northampton and Aberdeen and spread to London in the 1850s. By 1852 there were thirty-five ragged churches with an average attendance of 2500. The Ragged Church and Chapel Union was formed in 1853 with Lord Shaftesbury as its president.³² Here again can be seen the belief that the poor could be taught to be self reliant and 'respectable' if they were converted to Christianity.

Dr. Stephenson preached outside his church in order to reach those who would not come inside³³ and Dr. Barnardo hired a huge tent which he put up outside a notorious 'gin palace' in order to reach those who frequented such places.³⁴ During the second half of the nineteenth century many of the great city missions which provided practical help as well as weeknight and Sunday services were opened. People could find there recreation, food, help, advice and shelter. Many also encouraged emigration, and gave help to destitute families in order that they could emigrate in search of a better life. From these missions were sent out 'bible-women' whose purpose was to take the message of salvation to every person in a given area. They were however more often employed in social work. It was soon realised that people could not think about their eternal souls whilst they were dying of starvation and whilst they froze because they had no coal in the grate.

There were other denominations of the Christian Church, not of the evangelical practice who were involved in philanthropic works. The Roman Catholic Church opened homes for destitute and orphaned Catholic children, and the High Church

³² Heasman, p.79.

³³ Terry Philpot, *Action for Children: The Story of Britain's Foremost Children's Charity* (Oxford: Lion, 1994), p.18.

³⁴ Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1979), p.57.

sisterhoods cared for orphaned children. Christian Socialists worked to bring about change where they saw injustice and cruelty. For example, Charles Kingsley, who described in graphic detail the lot of the climbing boys employed by the chimney sweeps, in his novel *The Water Babies* (1863).

The Jewish community cared for the poor and for orphaned children of their faith.³⁵

Many large businesses provided care for orphaned children. One example was The Railway Servants' Orphanage which opened in 1875 caring for children of railway workers who died in service.³⁶ However, more often than not, only the children belonging to the specific religion or organisation were cared for in these cases. In the main evangelicals did not distinguish between races or creeds. Nevertheless when being cared for, the children were expected to join in the family prayers and Sunday services. Some of the homes also actively discouraged Roman Catholicism in particular.

The Charity Organisation Society, which was founded in 1869 to control and co-ordinate all charitable enterprises, was one of the biggest critics of indiscriminate philanthropy, such as soup kitchens, free coal, clothes and meals. They tried to ensure that people were not getting help from more than one source. Critics believed that indiscriminate charity did not alleviate the problem; it only encouraged people to be thriftless, and discouraged them from self-dependence. J.R. Green, the vicar of Stepney wrote:

It is not so much poverty that is increasing in the East as pauperism, the want of industry, of thrift or self-reliance ... some half a million people in the East

³⁵ *The Times*, 9th May 1845, p.4 col.a.

³⁶ Barbara Blandford Musson, *A Real Railway Child* (Derby: Derby University, 1996), p.8.

End of London have been flung into the crucible of public benevolence and have come out of it simple paupers.³⁷

Hollingshead wrote that philanthropy was wasted on adults because their habits had already been formed. However he went on to say that if it were concentrated on the young, improving ‘their minds and morals’, there was a better chance that they would ‘aim at a higher standard of living.’ This, he felt, was ‘the only road out of the slough of pauperism, dirt and overcrowding which exists in London, and if that fails us there is no hope’.³⁸ This debate continued throughout the century.

On 4th March 1865 *Punch* published a cartoon, which questioned ‘foreign’ versus ‘domestic’ philanthropy. The cartoon was entitled ‘Telescopic Philanthropy’ and showed Britannia looking through a telescope at a distant shoreline where there were represented many black Africans. The children in the foreground were dirty and unkempt, with blackened faces, but undoubtedly British children. One is tugging at Britannia’s clothes, and the caption reads: ‘Little London Arab “Please ‘M, ain’t we black enough to be cared for?”’³⁹ The inference here is that, although it was clear that help was needed in other countries, there was a greater and more immediate need close at hand to which people were closing their eyes. Dickens had satirised this attitude in *Bleak House* in 1853. The cartoon is obviously taken from ideas in the chapter entitled ‘Telescopic Philanthropy’. Mrs Jellyby is so concerned with her ‘African Project’ that she totally neglects her home and her children. Her little boy

³⁷ Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1980), p.94.

³⁸ Hollingshead, p.125.

³⁹ Jeremy Linden, ‘Telescopic Philanthropy’ <<http://projects.vassar.edu/punch/linden.html>> [accessed 28 October 2006] (the article discusses a cartoon published by *Punch* Vol.XLVIII, 4th March 1865, p.89).

falls and hurts himself but she ignores his distress, 'Go along, you naughty Peepy!' [she says] and fixed her fine eyes on Africa again.'⁴⁰

The 'little London Arabs' did become the subject of a huge amount of philanthropic activity as will be demonstrated in this thesis. Although the majority of those who were involved in this work were evangelical Christians, this was not the total picture. Neither was it the total picture that men were in the forefront; women were there too.

⁴⁰ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Penguin, 1996), p.14.

Chapter 5

Orphanages – the early but often selective answer

To set the scene for the phenomenon of so many children's homes coming into existence, coupled with so much concern for this section of society, it is important briefly to consider the help that had previously been available. One of England's oldest children's charities was the Foundling Hospital which was granted a Royal Charter in 1739 by George II and which first opened its doors to destitute children in 1741. Its founder was a successful ship builder and sea Captain, Thomas Coram, who had spent much of his working life in America. When he retired from the sea and returned to England he was horrified to find so much poverty in London. He saw many unwanted children whom no one seemed to care about and who were often left to die. It was by no means an easy or straightforward project to set up a refuge for them and it took Coram seventeen years of discussion and investigation to bring his plans to fruition. During this time he lobbied influential people, collected signatures on petitions and made his plans. Two of the friends who supported him were the artist William Hogarth, who contributed paintings to decorate the walls of the Hospital when it opened and George Frederick Handel, who gave performances in support of the work.⁴¹

There had been other charities in previous years set up to care for specific groups of orphans. Examples include; the Royal Asylum of St Anne which was founded in

⁴¹ Ruth K. McClure, *Coram's Children The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1981).

1702 for 'children whose parents had seen better days'⁴² and an 'Infantory' or nursery in Clerkenwell. However these were mostly for children who had been born to married parents. There had been no provision for foundlings; and the status of the very children Coram wanted to help was one of the stumbling blocks which held up the work. In the mind of most English people at the time a foundling was by definition illegitimate and this equalled disgrace, not just for the mother but the child also. The shame of being born illegitimate was something that could never be wiped out or forgotten. Henry Fielding in his novel *Tom Jones* (1749) portrays the attitude, if maybe a little exaggerated, of many people in the eighteenth century to an illegitimate child. Mr Allworthy summons his housekeeper when he discovers a baby asleep in his bed and she is horrified. The mother, she says, should be 'whipt at the cart's tail', and that babies like this are 'misbegotten wretches'. 'Faugh, how it stinks! It doth not smell like a Christian' she says and she advises Mr Allworthy to put it in a basket and leave it at the church-warden's door. She gives this advice even though it is raining and windy outside, because it is 'perhaps better for such creatures to die in a state of innocence, than to grow up to imitate their mothers'.⁴³

Coram worked hard to get his project off the ground and eventually the plans for the hospital were decided upon. The building would consist of two wings, each to accommodate 192 children, and a Chapel. It was to be built around a courtyard. Temporary accommodation was procured and in 1741 the first children were accepted. It was decided that the governing committee of the hospital were to receive the children without any questions being asked of the mother. However, because of a restriction in the numbers that could be cared for, certain criteria had to be fulfilled.

⁴² McClure, p.7.

⁴³ Henry Fielding, *Tom Jones* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.57.

The child must be under two months old and free from disease. In order to make sure of this, the mother had to wait until the child had been examined and if it failed any of the conditions she had to take it away again. When a child was admitted, any token the mother may have left with it was clearly labelled and kept in case the mother was able to collect her child at a future date. This rarely happened because the mother had to pay for the care the child had received in order to have her child back. On the 25th March when the first thirty infants were to be admitted the doors were opened at eight o'clock in the evening. By midnight the hospital was full. About every month after that another thirty or so babies were admitted. A few days after admittance the babies were baptised and taken to be cared for by wet nurses until they were four years old. They then returned to the hospital for care and education. In order for this to happen the new building had to be erected and in 1742 work on the west wing of the hospital began.⁴⁴

In the beginning it was decided that the children were to be taught to read but not to write and when they were old enough the boys were to be apprenticed either to farming or the navy and the girls into domestic service. It was believed that because of their unfortunate beginnings they must:

learn to undergo with Contentment the most Servile and laborious Offices ...
submit to the lowest stations... and ... not be educated in such a manner as
may put them upon a level with the Children of Parents who have the
Humanity and Virtue to preserve them, and the Industry to Support them.⁴⁵

In other words these children were to be cared for and given a start in life but at the lowest level and not equal with children who had been born to married parents. The

⁴⁴ McClure, (the general information in this section is taken from *Coram's Children*)

⁴⁵ McClure, pp.47-48.

children were given a Christian education, being taught the Catechism and hearing stories read from the Bible. However, even in this it would appear they were not to be allowed to forget their unfortunate beginnings. The hospital had its own hymnbook with some hymns written especially for it. One such example, a paraphrase of Psalm 51, is:

Wash off my foul offence,
And cleanse me from my Sin;
For I confess my crime, and see
How great my Guilt has been.

In Guilt each part was form'd
Of all this sinful frame;
In Guilt I was conceiv'd and born
The heir of Sin and Shame.⁴⁶

There were large numbers of children cared for in the hospital and so the routine was strict and the timetable rigid. They rose early, five o'clock or seven o'clock depending on the time of year and bedtime was seven o'clock at night. They were kept busy throughout the day with a short time in the afternoon for 'suitable open-air exercise': a walk for the girls and a game of ball for the boys. Some of the tasks undertaken by the boys were, 'dressing hemp, making twine and nets or netting purses' and gardening, and the girls performed household tasks, sewing, knitting and spinning.⁴⁷ The children were all dressed alike in warm serviceable clothes and the food, whilst probably filling, was monotonous, the same meal being served on the

⁴⁶ McClure, p.232.

⁴⁷ McClure, p.74.

same day each week. Each wing of the hospital, one for the boys and one for the girls, contained large dormitories referred to as 'wards' in which the children slept two in a bed. A watercolour by John Sanders painted in 1773 shows 'The Girls' Dining Room' which was a large hall with long tables at which the girls sat on wooden benches.⁴⁸

For other specific groups of orphans it would seem some provision was made, certainly from the end of the eighteenth century. A proposal to establish an asylum for the orphaned children of soldiers was put before the House of Commons on Monday 9th June 1800.⁴⁹ There was an asylum for female orphans, one for the orphaned children of sailors and one for the deaf mute. The latter one would seem to be unusual for a time when to be deaf and therefore unable to talk was often considered to be a mental handicap. In April 1800 an anniversary dinner was held for the asylum at which thirty-five children exhibited their skills. Many of them had learned to read and write and some could draw; but what astonished the assembled company more was that some could speak reasonably clearly. More astonishing still to the listeners was that they also spoke with understanding, and did not just chant pre-learned phrases parrot fashion. It was agreed that the children would be taught 'useful mechanic arts' so that they would eventually be able to 'provide for themselves.' The reporter stated that the children had been 'snatched from the tomb of burdensome uselessness which is moral death' and that they were 'ascending on the scale of rational existence' and would be 'fitted to act a useful part on the theatre of human existence'.⁵⁰ Such pretentious use of language not only reflects the era in which it was written but also emphasises what was believed to be an unusual and

⁴⁸ McClure, p.196.

⁴⁹ *The Times* 10th June 1800, p.2 col.b.

⁵⁰ *The Times* 28th April 1800, p.3 col.b.

great achievement. That such children could provide for themselves was certainly an extraordinary achievement in that day and age.

Another group of orphans for whom there was provision were Jewish children. In 1806 it was reported in *The Times* that there were 20,000 Jews living in England.⁵¹ There were numerous reports of fund raising efforts for the 'Jews' Orphan Asylum', an example of which was reported in 1836. A 'benefit' was held at the Surrey Theatre at which Miss Macarthy 'delivered in a pathetic manner, a poetical address on behalf of the objects of the charity'. The children were then brought onto the stage in order that the audience might see who they were supporting with their money. The report stated that nineteen parentless and destitute children were being cared for.⁵² A report in 1855 stated that there were thirty-eight children being cared for so it would seem that the institution did not grow rapidly. One reason for this could be that orphaned children were absorbed into the larger extended family, because Jewish communities were often closely knit.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century Andrew Reed, a minister of the Congregational New Road Chapel, in London had a vision for a refuge for orphans of 'respectable parents': illegitimate children were not to be admitted. The refuge was to be called the London Orphan Asylum and it was to cater for children from the age of seven to fourteen. There the children would be clothed, fed, cared for, educated, given a Christian upbringing and eventually helped to find employment. He did not want the children to work to finance the asylum; rather he thought it should be supported by voluntary contributions.

⁵¹ *The Times* 12th September 1806, p.2 col.c.

⁵² *The Times* 11th January 1836, p.6 col.b.

The children were admitted to Reed's asylum by elections, which were held twice a year. People were encouraged to subscribe at least one guinea a year to become a member of the institution and they could then vote at the elections. Mothers or guardians were able to obtain a list of the subscribers and they then had to find one of them who would be willing to sponsor their child. If the child came through this process the board would then consider their eligibility. The child had to fulfil certain criteria – be of respectable parents who had fallen on hard times, and not the offspring of domestic servants or farm workers; be healthy; possess the parent's marriage certificate, father's death certificate and own birth certificate. Respectable parents were classified as those where the father's income had been within the range of £100 to £400 a year; and where the family through the death of the father had been reduced to five shillings a head each week.⁵³ Class distinctions would appear to have been very important even when facing destitution. The asylum first opened in 1813 with six girls. The numbers soon grew and the boys and girls were accommodated in separate houses. However in 1825 a new purpose built asylum was opened. It had two separate wings, one for boys and one for girls, and a large chapel in the centre. In the school the children were taught by a monitor system, the teachers instructing the oldest children who in turn taught the younger ones. Reed's school is today an independent boarding and day school for boys where most of the pupils pay fees. However there are still some who receive grants from the foundation fund set up in 1813. In 1827 Reed founded another asylum for infant orphans, those who were too young to be admitted anywhere else. By 1832 there were eighty children in this asylum. Again the children to be helped were to come from the respectable middle class.

⁵³ James McMillan, and Norman Alvey, *Faith is the Spur* (Reed's School, Cobham: MCB University Press, 1993), p.20.

In Bristol, one of the great ports of Victorian times, the same story of poverty was repeated. The slum areas were wretched places, filthy and overcrowded, and the poor of the city existed in desperate conditions. There were scores of homeless destitute children growing up with no one to care for them. In 1846 Mary Carpenter opened a ragged school and she began to focus on the needs of those children who were the most difficult, realising that these were often the ones who turned to crime in order to live. In 1851 after publishing an essay, *Reformatory Schools for the Children of the Perishing and Dangerous Classes and for Juvenile Offenders* she instigated a conference in order to discuss her proposals. She followed this in 1852 by opening a reformatory for boys and two years later one for girls. She wrote and published other books on the treatment of convicts and campaigned for a change in the law with regard to youthful offenders, which led in part to the passing of the Juvenile Offenders' Act of 1854. In 1853 she wrote '*reformation* is the object to be aimed at with young offenders'.⁵⁴ Carpenter recognised that there were great differences in the upbringing, or lack of it, of the young criminals. There were those who were hardened criminals, wild and undisciplined; those whose parents trained them in crime; those neglected by their parents; and those who were totally destitute. All these children she believed could be rescued from their life of crime if the right environment was provided for them. They were totally lacking in any kind of moral teaching, 'moral orphans' was her description of them.⁵⁵

She wrote that the education of the child should have a prominent part in their care. They should receive both 'Religious and moral instruction', this however should not be from 'dogmatic instruction' but rather something learned from living with those

⁵⁴ Mary Carpenter, *Juvenile Delinquents: Their Condition and Treatment* (London: Cash, 1853), preface.

⁵⁵ Carpenter, p.7.

who care for them. Any education should be for the purpose of opening up their minds and quickening their interest rather than ‘the mere infusing of elements of knowledge.’⁵⁶ Another principle was to prepare the children for the future when they needed to earn their own living. They should be taught that work is useful and has a purpose in life. It should not be useless labour as that imposed in prison. She believed that if the child was interested in the work then a good job would be done. When writing of work for the girls she said ‘a pleasurable feeling and lively interest in the work should be excited by varied and evidently useful labours’.⁵⁷ So she believed that work was important and good for the child, teaching them self-discipline and also building in them a feeling of self-worth. ‘Of not less importance than the hours of work is the right employment of time allotted for recreation’. This then was her next principle, it was just as important to have rest from work and engage in different pursuits. During recreation time the child should be guided into activities they enjoyed: ‘healthful and innocent sport’ was the way Carpenter defined it, because otherwise when together in the playground they would take lessons ‘from each other ... in vice’.⁵⁸

Corporal punishment, wrote Carpenter, should be kept to a minimum. In support of her theory she quoted from Eadmer’s life of Anselm. The abbot consulted Anselm about the education of boys who were badly behaved, ‘day and night they were continually beating them, *but still they grew worse and worse.*’ Anselm replied ‘*He who is young needs gentle treatment*’, if the boys only received harsh treatment they would ‘grow up full of hatred and suspicion’.⁵⁹ On the other hand, neither did she

⁵⁶ Carpenter, p.303.

⁵⁷ Carpenter, p.309.

⁵⁸ Carpenter, pp.312-313.

⁵⁹ Carpenter, p.316.

believe in over indulgence; order, discipline, attention to duty and punishment when necessary to maintain these values was the rule to which she worked.

In order that the children should learn all these things from first principles, Carpenter believed they should be cared for in family groups so that they would experience love and individual care first hand, and through this learn to trust and love in return. In this she was influenced by the proposals put forward by Dr Wicherd for the running of the Rauhe Haus in Germany. In his home for destitute children, founded in 1833, he proposed that the children were in family groups of no more than twelve, under the supervision of a 'Brother' with himself in overall charge. Carpenter said of him that he 'appears to breathe his spirit into the entire establishment'.⁶⁰ Many of the children had lived by stealing, and so again following a plan used by Wicherd, in order to teach them to respect other people's property, they were allowed to own things of their own.

Carpenter is particularly interesting for this study because many of the ideas in her books, and presumably the way in which she intended the reformatories to operate, run parallel with some of those used by the founders of the children's homes I shall be looking at in more detail later. There were differences in that the children she dealt with were mainly those who had been in trouble and come before the courts. Also it was not called a children's home, but a reformatory. Having said that it would appear, if her beliefs were put into practice, the reformatories were run on the lines of a home and not a prison.

⁶⁰ Carpenter, p.264.

Another philanthropist working to alleviate suffering in Bristol was George Müller (1805-1898). In 1832 he had accepted an invitation to become a pastor of the Gideon Chapel, part of the Brethren movement. He soon became concerned by the number of destitute children he saw living on the streets of the old port. He knew the dangers they faced both physically and morally. In 1836 he opened the first of his homes for thirty children; this was to be followed soon after by three more. By 1844 he had 130 children in his care. In 1849 he opened a new purpose-built home in Ashley Down, Bristol for 300 children. This was followed in 1857, 1862, 1868 and 1870 by four more purpose-built homes. The total number of children able to be housed in these homes was 2050. The children were given a good standard of education, the boys were trained for a trade and the girls for domestic service, nursing or teaching. The boys were cared for until they were fourteen years old and the girls until they were seventeen. Müller never engaged in money raising efforts; he relied entirely on God to provide for their needs. All the money needed for the building of the homes and for the general running of them came from voluntary giving. Everything was paid for on receipt and no debt was allowed to be incurred. 'By 1886 he had received £700,000 through prayer and had over 2000 children in his care.'⁶¹ The children in Müller's homes were not cared for in family groups. There were so many of them that it seemed the need could only be met by an institutional method.

These are just some examples of the types of help that had been available. Most were for specific groups of children and none was widely available. However as the nineteenth century progressed the plight of the destitute children began to intrude on the public conscience. As already stated, some of the ragged schools opened refuges,

⁶¹ 'About Bristol' <<http://www.about-bristol.co.uk/ash-01.asp>> [accessed 8 October 2006].

especially during the extremely cold weather. Nevertheless this did not encompass the growing army of 'city arabs'. Suddenly, it seems, help became available. From the middle of the nineteenth century a number of young dynamic evangelical ministers were appointed to various city churches in the slum areas of London. The Catholic Church was also being re-vitalised. Women too were inspired by the religious teachings and were motivated to become involved in child rescue. So through these various groups the problem of the homeless starving children took on an immediate significance and they made it their life's work to care for and rescue poverty stricken children.

Chapter 6

An overview of the explosion of care post 1850

Müller's work in Bristol, which was discussed in the previous chapter, continued throughout the century and beyond. His methods and ideas had similarities and also differences with the philanthropists who opened homes in London in the second half of the century. Müller's organisation continues to this day, as do many of the larger societies which began at this time. The work they are involved in now is obviously different as the needs of society change. For the purpose of this research it is not possible to study in detail all of the homes. I will therefore give a brief overview of some of them before going on to give a comparative analysis of The Children's Home founded by Dr. Stephenson, the Catholic Child Care Agencies, Sharman's Homes, and the homes and emigration schemes run by Maria Rye and Annie Macpherson.

When considering the reason why so many people became concerned with the problem, the involvement of such an influential figure as Lord Shaftesbury cannot be discounted. He made speeches in Parliament and was a leading light in the Ragged School movement. He spoke at meetings, and the speeches were subsequently reported in the newspapers. After one such meeting, where tales of 'woe and destitution'¹ were heard, a group of businessmen discussed the dilemma and came up with a plan to save some of the destitute boys. Their intention was to take the boys away from London and set up a 'little boys' colony'.² This would be a village containing workshops, a school and a chapel. There would be houses where the boys

¹ *The Times* 17th June 1867, p.6 col e.

² 'Homes for Little Boys' <www.hortonkirbyandsouthdarenth.co.uk/homes_boys.htm> [accessed 8 October 2006].

would live in groups of about thirty, cared for by a male and a female worker, who were to 'treat the children as their fathers or their mothers would'.³ This of course was the concept of an ideal family and not the kind of family life most of these boys had ever been used to. The area decided on for this home was in Kent and it became known as the Farningham Homes. On 9th July 1866 Alexandra, Princess of Wales, laid the foundation stone. At the ceremony Mr Hanbury, the President of the institution, gave an address in which he explained that the purpose of the home was to 'feed, clothe, educate, and train to industrial work homeless and destitute little boys, whether orphans or not, who were in danger of falling into crime'.⁴

A year after the laying of the stone the first cottages were ready each one named for those who had worked to raise the money; for example house number four was to be named the 'Children's Cottage' because all the money had been raised by the children of those who supported the charity.⁵ In his speech at the opening ceremony Lord Shaftesbury remarked that it had been said that there were 10,000 children who would benefit from the village. However, he said, this figure was far below the actual number of children in London without a home. As an example he quoted the story of a boy who took one 'of his tribe to a comfortable lodging inside the great iron roller in the Regent's Park'.⁶ This anecdote was greeted by laughter from the assembled audience and this, with what was said, shows two things about the attitude and understanding of the more wealthy Victorians. First the racial rhetoric in the use of the word 'tribe' to describe the destitute children reinforces the argument that they were thought of as being of another nationality, of not belonging; and secondly the

³ *The Times* 17th June 1867, p.6 col.e.

⁴ *The Times* 9th July 1866, p.6 col.c.

⁵ *The Times* 17th June 1867, p.6 col.e.

⁶ *The Times* 17th June 1867, p.6 col.e.

laughter showed that most people there had no idea of the reality of living on the streets. It all seemed rather romantic and jolly good fun. Nevertheless, it must be said that all of these people were there because they saw the opportunity to engage in a philanthropic work and help those less fortunate than themselves.

Many of the homes which opened came under the auspices of a particular church or came about through the influence of a church minister. One of the great names of the nineteenth century in this respect was Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892), the renowned evangelical preacher and philanthropist. He became the pastor of New Park Street Baptist Church in 1854 at nineteen years of age. There had been much rebuilding in the area and many people had moved out of the city, and the church, which at one time had been in a thriving community, was now in a depressed area. Spurgeon's first sermon was preached to a congregation of eighty; but from this small beginning the church grew rapidly, so much so that new premises had to be built to accommodate the growing number. In 1861 the New Metropolitan Tabernacle, built to seat 5000 people, was dedicated and Spurgeon became one of the most popular evangelical preachers of his time. He also addressed many of the social problems of the day believing that 'faith and prayer should issue in good works'⁷ and under him the 'Metropolitan Tabernacle became a centre of social service.'⁸ Philip Paul argued that it is doubtful whether Spurgeon saw the need for a radical change in the structure of society.⁹ Like many other evangelicals he believed that when a person accepted the gospel, believed the good news of Jesus, then a change would take place in their

⁷ Ernest W. Bacon, *Spurgeon: Heir of the Puritans* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1967), p.97.

⁸ Philip Paul, 'Spurgeon and Social Reform' *The Expository Times*, 86 (October 1974 - September 1975), 246-247 (p.246).

⁹ Paul, p.247.

life. With many such changes there would ultimately come about a change for the better in society as a whole.

When addressing a prayer meeting one day at the Tabernacle, Spurgeon said:

We are a huge church, and should be doing more for the Lord in this great city. I want us, tonight, to ask Him to send us *some new work*; and if we need money to carry it on, let us pray that *the means may also be sent*.¹⁰

Soon after this he had a letter from Mrs Hillyard, a clergyman's widow, saying she wished to do something for fatherless children and she offered £20,000 to Spurgeon in order to start an orphanage. She said there was need for an orphan home where boys could be taught Christian values and where they could be accepted without having to find wealthy sponsorship. An article published in *The Times*, stated that she was 'a very philanthropic lady'.¹¹ At first Spurgeon asked if he should send the money to Müller in Bristol for his work with destitute children. However Mrs Hillyard was insistent that Spurgeon himself used the money to set up an orphanage. This Spurgeon believed was the answer to the prayer that God would give them 'some new work' to do. Mrs Hillyard was not a member of the Metropolitan Tabernacle; she was attached to a Brethren assembly. She had, however, read an article by Spurgeon in *The Sword and the Trowel* in which he wrote about the need for establishing schools where Christian truths were taught. 'A great effort should be made to multiply our day schools, and to render them distinctly religious, by teaching the Gospel in them, and by labouring to bring the children *as children* to the Lord Jesus'.¹² Spurgeon's

¹⁰ Arnold Dallimore, *Spurgeon: A New Biography* (Pennsylvania: Banner of Truth, 1985), p.126.

¹¹ *The Times* 10th September 1867, p.7 col.e (*The Times* reported the benefactor as being Mrs Hillyer, from other reports it would seem this was a misspelling of her name).

¹² Graham W. Hughes, *Spurgeon's Homes* (Pamphlet written c.1950's, Spurgeon's Archive, photocopy supplied by the archivist June 2003), p.1.

design then, in the first place, was for education. However with the gift from Mrs Hillyard and the enthusiasm of so many people, the orphanage came into being.

Temporary accommodation was procured and about twelve boys were admitted. In the mean time a site for the new home was found in Clapham Road, Stockwell near to the Tabernacle so that the children would be ‘brought under the sound of the Gospel.’¹³ The site was a large meadow where it was intended that several houses would be erected for the ‘reception, maintenance and education, secular and religious, of poor orphans’.¹⁴ The foundation stone was laid in 1867 and a home for boys was ready in 1869. The home for girls was not ready until 1879-80. Although the care of the destitute children was of great importance, it was considered to be of paramount importance to ‘rescue’ the children from a life where they knew nothing of the Gospel and to bring them up in a Christian atmosphere.

All funds came in answer to prayer, so no specific fund raising efforts were needed. When the money looked as if it was running out Spurgeon and the Trustees prayed and it is reported that sufficient for their needs arrived. It was said that ‘year by year gifts, legacies and church offerings continued to provide for all the needs’.¹⁵ Children from all denominations were accepted; need was the only criterion. The reporter for *The Times* stated that ‘although the orphanage is established under the auspices of the Tabernacle, its benefits are to be extended to the most deserving objects, without denominational bias.’¹⁶ However the home was specifically for ‘fatherless’ children: the remaining parent had to be able to produce her marriage certificate. The

¹³ Bacon, p.98.

¹⁴ *The Times* 10th September 1867, p.7 col.e.

¹⁵ Bacon, p.99.

¹⁶ *The Times* 10th September 1867, p.7 col.e.

instructions to applicants stated that ‘illegitimate children are not within the scope of the institution’.¹⁷ Forms had to be filled in with the strictest honesty, and if the applicant was found out in the ‘slightest untruthfulness’¹⁸ this would immediately disqualify the child. After this rigorous investigation the child then went on a waiting list until there was a vacancy. The children when finally admitted must be clean and not suffering from any illness. The instructions said: ‘the friends must be careful to see that the boy is free from any eruptions on the body, and that the head and linen are perfectly clean; *otherwise the boy will not be received*’.¹⁹ These then were not the ragged urchins who were living on the streets of London with no one to care for them.

Spurgeon was a great Baptist preacher, an evangelical and a philanthropist who believed that good works automatically followed from prayer. He asked God to show him what He wanted him to do and then set about doing it. The orphanage is a clear case in point. Although Spurgeon appears to have been the driving force behind the orphanage, and he took a personal interest in the children, it would not seem that he was involved in the day-to-day running of the home. Children from destitute families were admitted, but not the ragged, often illegitimate, urchins of the streets. However, need was the only criterion for admission; there were no elections and no voting system as had been the case in some other homes, such as Reed’s school. Neither did Spurgeon’s Homes have an emigration policy as it will be demonstrated so many of the other homes did. All the children remained in Britain whilst in their care.

¹⁷ Annual Report of the Stockwell Orphanage for Fatherless Boys 1871-72 ‘Instructions to Applicants and Friends of the Inmates’, (Spurgeon’s Archive, photocopy supplied by the archivist June 2003), p.6.

¹⁸ Annual Report of Stockwell Orphanage 1871-72, p.6.

¹⁹ Annual Report of Stockwell Orphanage 1871-72, p.7.

Another great name of the century, probably one of the best known, was Dr Barnardo (1845-1905). There is a question mark over when his work with the street children actually started. Gillian Wagner states in his biography that although Barnardo made reference to his home for destitute children starting in 1866, and the organisation actually celebrated its centenary in 1966, this could not have been the year for a number of reasons.²⁰ Barnardo arrived in London in 1866 to train as a medical missionary with the intention of going to China. He was at first pursuing his medical studies at the London Hospital but when he was not accepted to go to China immediately, he let his studies lapse for a while and concentrated his energies on his work as an evangelist. He taught in a ragged school in Earnest Street, a work he had been involved in when living in Dublin. It was during this time that he became aware of the plight of the homeless children. Wagner dates his meeting with Jim Jarvis, the first of his boys, to the winter of 1869–1870. Mark Smith in his internet article states that the first home was opened in 1870 at 18 Stepney Causeway.²¹ The Barnardo Internet homepage also states that in 1870 the first home was opened, however the article states that the meeting with Jim Jarvis was during the intervening years and came about as a result of the work he was involved in at the ragged school.²² Although there are minor discrepancies, what is clear is that Barnardo's work with destitute children, in one form or another, began almost as soon as he arrived in London in 1866.

²⁰ Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1980), p.50.

²¹ M. K. Smith, (2002) 'Thomas John Barnardo ('the Doctor')', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, Last update: July 28, 2007 <<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/barnardo.htm>> [accessed 30 July 2007], p.4.

²² Barnardo's home page <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/who_we_are/history.htm> [accessed 8 October 2006].

The first home in Stepney Causeway was for boys. Thirty-three were taken in and as well as being given bed and board they were taught simple trades in order that they would be able to support themselves in the future. Barnardo did not wait for boys to come knocking on the door. He went around the streets and 'rescued' them. One of the famous stories told of him concerned a boy nicknamed 'Carrots'. He came looking for shelter but was turned away because the home was full. However a few days later he was found dead from malnutrition and exposure. After this Barnardo had a sign put on the door, which read 'No Destitute Child Ever Refused Admission'.²³ Barnardo soon became aware that a similar scheme was needed for girls and in 1873 the first girls were admitted. In 1880 a village home for girls was opened which was capable of taking 1000 girls.

Although many of the other homes were opened under the auspices of a specific Church denomination, Barnardo's was always independent of any particular Church. This latter fact is a pointer to its founder's independent autocratic personality. Barnardo was himself a member of the Brethren fellowship. He was an energetic, charismatic character who was strongly evangelical, and appears to have been a larger-than-life person. He did not suffer fools gladly and he had intense views on how things should be done. Probably because of these characteristics he became involved in various controversies, some of which ended in court proceedings²⁴.

In many ways Barnardo left himself wide open to criticism about his financial affairs. He worked without a committee or treasurer and handled all funds that came for his

²³ Barnardo's home page <http://www.barnardos.org.uk/who_we_are/history.htm> [accessed 8 October 2006].

²⁴ Wagner (General information in this section unless otherwise stated is taken from *Barnardo*).

various projects himself.²⁵ When later a council was elected to oversee the finances of the homes, Barnardo often ignored them and went his own way.²⁶ He spread his appeals far and wide and accepted very many small donations from a wide range of people rather than a few large donations. In 1891 he set up the 'Young Helpers' League'; these were children who gave some of their pocket money to help those less fortunate than themselves. Smith states that Barnardo was 'one of the first to develop mass charity giving'.²⁷

There was an allegation of an affair with his landlady which was proved to be unfounded, although the rumour did rumble on for some time.²⁸ A third allegation was made that he falsely used the title of Doctor. Barnardo had begun his medical training when he first arrived in London but because of his increasing involvement with evangelism he let his studies lapse and it was not until some years later, in 1876, that he completed his studies in Edinburgh. However in 1870 when he signed the lease for the house in Stepney Causeway he described himself as a Doctor of Medicine²⁹ and he adopted the title of Doctor from early in 1873.

Barnardo found himself in trouble over some 'before and after' photos which he used for publicity. It was said that he made the children look much worse than they actually were in order to have a more striking effect.³⁰ He also antagonised the Catholic Church authorities by taking in and hiding away Catholic children in order to

²⁵ Wagner, p.87.

²⁶ Smith, p.3.

²⁷ Smith, p.3.

²⁸ Wagner, pp.88-89.

²⁹ Wagner, p.110.

³⁰ Wagner, pp.144-146.

protect them from what he believed to be an erroneous faith.³¹ This aspect will be looked at in greater detail when discussing the work done by the Catholic Child Care agencies.

As well as the homes he opened in England Barnardo was also involved in an emigration programme. The first party of boys went in 1882, followed by girls in 1883; between 1882 and 1939 the organisation sent over 30,000 children to Canada.³² Barnardo often made claims to having been the first to recognise the problem of the homeless children and although this is obviously not so, he certainly worked to provide care for every aspect of need on an ever-growing scale. His intention towards the children was always to do what was best for them as he saw it. Wagner wrote of him that he had ‘not only made known the needs of children in a way never before attempted, he had endeavoured to meet those needs on a scale no one individual had ever before tried to do’.³³

Whilst Barnardo was living and working in East London another young man, James Condell Fegan (1852-1925), began his work in South London. Fegan was born in Southampton and moved to London with his family when he was thirteen. In 1870 at the age of eighteen his Christian faith became personal to him and he felt that God was calling him to evangelise. He gave out tracts from door to door as well as in the public houses. Whilst doing this he discovered the destitute boys who were living on the streets. One day he followed a group of these boys into a building which he found was a ragged school. He became a teacher in one of the schools but soon began to feel that it was not enough. Many of the boys needed somewhere to sleep especially

³¹ Wagner, chapter 13.

³² Smith, p.7.

³³ Wagner, p.311.

in inclement weather. Fegan also believed that they needed to be removed from the streets where the only influences on their lives were evil ones. He felt that if they had a safe environment and moral influences they would begin to live honest useful lives. Fegan gave so much of his time, as well as working to earn his living, that his health failed and he was advised to go to the seaside to recuperate. He went to Bognor Regis and there he met his 'first Arab'. This boy, he said, was a 'real Bedouin of our social Desert'.³⁴ He took him back to London and settled him in an institution. At the ragged school he told some of the boys and they said they knew many boys who were much worse off. Some were too ragged even to come to the ragged school. This confirmed Fegan in his decision to provide somewhere where the boys could live and be safe.

At first he rented a small house for five shillings a week which he used as a school and where some boys could shelter at night. They then went about their usual occupations during the day. However Fegan realised that it did not matter what they were taught at night, mixing during the day with their old companions and visiting their old haunts soon made them forget any good they had learned. He consulted four friends and they each agreed to give £5 in order to start a home for the boys. They had the idea that the home would become self-supporting when the boys were taught a trade and then they would each get their money back. However it is recorded that none of them were ever repaid and Fegan said that all his friends 'have "passed on before", but that I never heard any one of them regret his investment. I have never regretted mine.'³⁵ In May 1872 Fegan opened the first home in the High Street,

³⁴ 'How I found my first Arab' Tract c.1908 (Fegan's Archive).

³⁵ 'The way which God led thee forty years', Tract c.1910 (Fegan's Archive), p.9.

Deptford. This soon became too small and the property next door was acquired as well.

At the age of twenty-one Fegan resigned from other work and gave himself full-time to his work with boys. Although he was not an ordained minister he was an evangelist, holding open-air meetings and missions. Neither was he affiliated to any particular church although his parents had been members of the Brethren fellowship. His concern for the homeless boys became the driving force in his life. Fullerton wrote of him, 'Night after night would find him, with lantern in hand, peering into all imaginable corners and hiding places.' He was looking for 'derelict boys' and would sometimes bring in fifteen to twenty 'street arabs' after a night's search.³⁶ A funny little story was told about someone who overheard people talking about Fegan, as the man who was 'so successful with arabs'. He wrote to him requesting 'a pair of arabs, warranted sound and with good manners, standing about 14.1'. Fegan wrote that the man was 'nonplussed when he saw from the heading of the notepaper that it was not horses but *street-arabs* I was interested in'.³⁷

As the years went by homes were opened in Greenwich, Southwark Street and Stony Stratford. Fegan was then concerned about those boys whose health had been impaired by their previous living conditions. 1883 saw the opening of an orphanage in Ramsgate so that the benefit of fresh sea air would be felt. This home could take up to eighty boys. After a while, when the home had become established, a leaflet was published giving details of the work, as well as other articles. Named *The Rescue* it stated that it was a 'Monthly Record of Christian Efforts in connection with Mr

³⁶ W.Y. Fullerton, *J.W.C. Fegan: a tribute* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, c1931), p.46.

³⁷ 'The way which God led thee forty years' (Fegan's Archive), p.10.

Fegan's homes, amongst our Juvenile Home-Heathen'.³⁸ Here again can be seen the racial rhetoric; the street children were a race apart until being brought under the influence of Christian teachers and given a home. The leaflet gave details of children who had been rescued. One example is of a boy who was found one night in one of the recesses of London Bridge. The officer who found him wrote, 'his pale face tells a sad tale, and as his head lies wearily against the stone-wall with such a look of despair, I feel thankful I am able to offer him the shelter of a Home.' The boy said he had lost his job and the man who his mother lived with turned him out into the street. When his story was investigated it turned out to be true and his mother gave permission for him to be taken into the home and in due course to be emigrated to Canada.³⁹ On another occasion two boys were brought in who said they had nowhere to live and no one to take care of them. However on investigation it was found that they had both run away from home. The mother of one of them would not hear of his going into the home or to Canada because she said he was nearly old enough to earn money and be of some use. One night sixteen boys were found and taken into the home for the night. However, of these, eight were discovered to be runaways and were taken back to their homes the next day. Of the others, five were taken in to be cared for and three were given clothes so that they would be suitably attired in order to get a job.⁴⁰ It appears that each child's story was verified in order that appropriate arrangements could be made.

Some details of the routine and layout of the home at Southwark Street were given by Henry Perry. He wrote a report, which was published in *The Rescue*, of an inspection of the home made in 1885. The boys appeared very healthy and well cared for on a

³⁸ 'The Rescue' August 1885 (Fegan's Archive).

³⁹ 'The Rescue' August 1885 (Fegan's Archive), p.4.

⁴⁰ 'The Rescue' August 1885 (Fegan's Archive), p.5.

vegetarian diet. This was a regime that Fegan had instituted six months before and which everyone felt was proving beneficial to the health of the boys as well as saving money. The kitchen was at the top of the house so the inspection started there and worked downwards. The inspectors were impressed with the dining room which, when the tables were removed, doubled up as a gymnasium during wet weather. On the floor below this was a large bath, where the boys were 'thoroughly scrubbed and douched' on entering the home, and one of the two large dormitories. The next floor was one big dormitory and in each of the two dormitories was a master's bedroom. On the next floor was the schoolroom where the boys were taught writing, arithmetic and reading. The inspectors also listened to them answering 'Scripture questions'. On the ground floor was the printing works where boys were given training and where amongst other things *The Rescue* was produced. The basement had been turned into a large playroom, and was also used for band practice. Whilst there Perry wrote that they met some boys who had only recently come into the home and he said 'the contrast between the raw material and the orderly, neat, clean, little men at their desks, was most striking.'⁴¹

Fegan wrote numerous tracts and publicity leaflets in order to raise money. *The Rescue* was also intended, not only to raise public awareness of the work, but to raise money; it cost '1d' a month or '1/6 post free' for a year.⁴² As well as including lists of donations and short extracts from donors' letters, emotive poems were written and printed, again as a means of appealing for funds. Two verses of one written for Christmas 1885 are as follows:

⁴¹ 'The Rescue' August 1885 (Fegan's Archive), pp.12-13.

⁴² 'The Rescue' August 1885 (Fegan's Archive).

Think of the children to-day
Out in the cold;
Too weak and hungry for play,
Weary and old.

Old thro' their need and their pain
Old in Life's Spring
Help them to gladness again
Teach them to sing.⁴³

From a small beginning the home grew and as the need arose more premises were acquired. Lord Blantyre, who was a close friend of Fegan, suggested to him that for many of the boys a life in Canada would be beneficial. Fegan went in 1884, taking ten boys with him, and he was so impressed by what he found that he took more boys later the same year. From then on boys were emigrated regularly. In order to prepare the boys for the life they would have in the farming community in Canada Fegan bought a farm in England. He had implements brought from Canada and had the boys trained in the way they were used. During one of his visits to Canada Fegan wrote a diary which was subsequently printed by instalments in *The Rescue*. It contained information of the distribution of the boys and the various places to which they went. Nothing is said about how situations were found for the boys and they seem to have been scattered over a large area. Contact would appear to have been kept with them and many gave money from their earnings in order to help other boys to emigrate.

⁴³ 'The Rescue' November 1885 (Fegan's Archive).

Fegan's homes only cared for boys and they were run on institutional lines with the boys sleeping in large dormitories. Nevertheless, the children cared for were destitute street children who were educated, trained and helped to become independent.

Ten or more years later than the previous named homes began, a young Sunday school teacher, Edward De Montjoie Rudolf, became concerned about some of his pupils. Through them he was made aware of the many destitute children who were still living and begging on the streets with no proper care. He led a deputation to the Archbishop of Canterbury with the proposal to open a children's home under the auspices of the Church of England. In 1881 the 'Church of England Central Home for Waifs and Strays' was opened in Dulwich, South London.⁴⁴ Rudolf was the instigator of the project and oversaw all its activities, whilst at the same time continuing his work as a civil servant. It was not until later in life that he became a clergyman. Rudolf was of the opinion that children would be better cared for in small family groups and accordingly he set up small cottage-type homes each caring for ten children. Each home was to have a master and matron to act as father and mother to the children in their care. He believed that children developed more naturally if placed in a real family and so some children were placed in foster care.

The ragged school movement was influential in reaching not only large numbers of destitute and homeless children but also in bringing their plight to the notice of many more people than would otherwise have become aware of them. Quintin Hogg (1845–1903) founded one such school at Charing Cross in 1864.⁴⁵ With a number of other young men he then helped to set up a society known as The Homes for Working

⁴⁴ *Reaching out for a better future: A short history of The Children's Society since 1881*, p.1 (np, nd).

⁴⁵ *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*, ed. by Magnus Magnusson (Chambers: Cambridge 1996), p.722.

Boys in London. This society was to provide homes for working boys which would 'afford them healthy recreation and above all, to surround them with Christian influences and friendly guidance at the most critical period of their lives'.⁴⁶ Whilst at Eton, Charles Baring Young (1850-1928) had been influenced by Quintin Hogg's Christian principles and after leaving Eton and obtaining a degree at Trinity College Cambridge he too became involved with work in the ragged school and in the homes for working boys.

Baring Young was a devout evangelical member of the Church of England and a very rich man from a family of bankers. In 1883 he purchased the estates of Daylesford and Kingham Hill in the Cotswolds. Leading on from his work among the children in the ragged school he planned to build a home, which was also a school, where boys could be educated and trained for future life. It was to be in beautiful surroundings in the countryside, far from the smoke, dirt and evil influences surrounding them in London. In 1885, the year he entered Parliament, he put his plan into action. Towards the end of 1886 the first house was ready for occupation and by Christmas twelve boys were living there. All the staff he employed were Christian men and women and their role was to 'train boys in Christian Character'.⁴⁷ The rest of the houses were built over a period of time. It was a gradual process and never intended to rescue huge numbers of boys in the way that some of the other charities were doing. By the end of the nineteenth century there were only 200 people resident at the school, which included staff as well as boys. Baring Young was very involved in the running of the home and displayed a close interest in all the boys, ensuring that everything needed for the full rounded education and care of the boys was provided.

⁴⁶ Alfred Jarvis, *Charles Baring Young of Daylesford 1850 – 1928: his life and work* (Church Book Room Press c.1950), pp.17-18.

⁴⁷ Jarvis, p.43.

There were school buildings, workshops, a Chapel, fruit and vegetable gardens, a swimming bath and before the end of the century a modern gymnasium. The Christian education of the boys was very important to him and he made sure that Sunday was a special day. Best clothes were worn, different activities pursued and all the boys attended two church services and Sunday school.

After a while he investigated the idea of settling some of the boys in Canada which he believed to be a land with plenty of opportunity. To this end he began a model farm on his land where the boys could learn farming methods and he also purchased one in Canada. Any boy who wished to emigrate was trained on the farm in England for at least a year and after arriving in Canada lived also for a year on the farm there for the purpose of getting further training. They were then encouraged to branch out on their own. It would appear that only small numbers went at a time. The first party consisted of five boys and the second ten boys.

His work for underprivileged boys was not widely publicised during his life; however after his death, when his will was published there were a number of press reports.

The Daily Chronicle's headline read 'Donor of Millions to charities Dies in Obscurity, Two-thirds of fortune given away by ex-MP'. The article described him as a 'Poor boys' benefactor' and a 'modest philanthropist'. It said of him that he lived 'A life of secret service for others' and that 'kindness and humility [were] his only eccentricities'.⁴⁸ Similarly too the *Sunday News* wrote of a 'Vast Fortune given away in Secret' and 'Ex-MP's Wonderful Work for Friendless Boys'.⁴⁹ However not all the newspapers got the facts right. *The Children's Newspaper* carried the story saying

⁴⁸ *The Daily Chronicle*, c.1929 (photocopy of article supplied by Rev. Ralph Mann, September 2003).

⁴⁹ *The Sunday News*, c.1929 (photocopy of article supplied by Rev. Ralph Mann, September 2003).

that 'one of the most beautiful secrets of our times has just been discovered'. Baring Young was described as 'A good rich man' and 'The Kingly Benefactor who gave the Kingham Homes'.⁵⁰ However the article mentioned that he took a party of the boys on his honeymoon, but the fact is Baring Young was never married.

One thing that was unique about this work of philanthropy was that Baring Young paid for everything himself, the land, the building, staff wages, everything needed for the care of the boys. He even set up a trust fund in his will to continue the work after his death. Baring Young's purpose in all this was 'to take poor boys mainly from urban areas, place them in a healthy and better environment, give to them a sound training and Christian education, and a start in life.'⁵¹ Unfortunately on his own instructions all Baring Young's personal papers were destroyed on his death so information comes mainly from secondary sources. However Alfred Jarvis who wrote his biography was personally acquainted with him.

It has been shown that it was the desperate plight of the street children that had brought the problem to the notice of the general public. For some the fear of a criminal explosion was uppermost, for others horror of an alien lifestyle, but for the child-savers it was concern for the children as human beings. They made it their remit to remove the children from the unsafe outside space of the city streets and provide them with a safe inside space and home-life⁵². This was something many of the children had never known.

⁵⁰ *The Children's Newspaper* Number 514 January 26th 1929 (photocopy of article supplied by Rev. Ralph Mann, September 2003).

⁵¹ Jarvis, p.108.

⁵² Barbara Daniels 'The Philanthropist and the Street Child: their place in Victorian Society' in *Victorian Space(s)* ed by Karen Sayer (Leeds: Trinity and All Saints, University of Leeds, 2006), pp.142-153.

As has already been noted, other towns and cities were also having a problem with homeless and destitute children and so independent or local homes were opened in many places. This study is concentrating mainly on the problems in London but a brief mention of the wider picture will set the scene as it applied to Britain as a whole.

Many of the children who were emigrated to Canada from London and other parts of the country travelled from Liverpool docks. Liverpool too had the problem of destitute homeless children, and in 1872 the Liverpool Sheltering Homes were opened in Myrtle Street. Hearing of the work being carried out by Annie Macpherson in London, two men who were partners in a shipping firm, Alexander Balfour and Stephen Williamson, felt the need to do a similar work in Liverpool. Macpherson recommended her sister Louisa Birt as the person most able to help. At the Liverpool Sheltering Homes, children who had lost either one or both of their parents were cared for. They were given an elementary education, religious instruction, a short training in various trades and then positions and homes were found for them in Canada. In the first year that the home was opened 600 children applied and 360 were admitted.⁵³

Birmingham too had its problems. In 1869 Sir Josiah Mason opened an orphanage for 300 children, which was soon extended to accommodate 500 children. However Mason does not appear to have been driven by a love or concern for children, if the reports of life within the orphanage are to be believed. It would appear that his purpose was to advertise the fact of his philanthropic giving. The building was large with three tall, striking towers, and it was in a prominent position. He does not seem to have been personally involved in the day-to-day mechanics of running the

⁵³Lilian M. Birt, *The Children's Home-finder: The story of Annie Macpherson and Louisa Birt* (London: Nisbet, 1913), p.114.

institution. However he did impose a strict regime. The children slept in large dormitories, they had barely adequate food and they had to work hard doing most of the jobs involved in running the orphanage. Also it is written that some of the staff employed to care for the children were in fact 'sadistic bullies'.⁵⁴ It does not sound to have been a very homely kind of place.

Nevertheless there were other people in Birmingham who had a genuine concern for destitute children. When Dr John Middlemore returned to Birmingham after studying in America and travelling in Canada he was appalled to see the conditions in which so many of the poor were living. There was a stark contrast between them and the wide-open spaces and clean air he had experienced in Canada. In 1872 he opened a home for boys on St Luke's Road, Birmingham and soon afterwards a home for girls on Spring Street. These homes were known as the Children's Emigration Homes and their purpose was to prepare children for a new life in Canada. Middlemore began emigrating children in 1873, finding them homes in Toronto and London, Ontario. He believed that the only way to save many of the children who came into his care was to remove them as far away as possible from the bad companions they had been used to associate with. Therefore boys who had been accused of stealing and lying were taken in preference to poor but well-behaved children. However, double standards applied to girls in that they could be refused as being impure if they had been raped. Middlemore was involved in the way the homes were run and personally escorted many parties of children to Canada and saw them settled in their new homes⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Josiah Mason <<http://jquarter.members.beeb.net/morejmason.htm>> [accessed 9 October 2006].

⁵⁵ Patricia Roberts-Pichette, 'John Throgmorton Middlemore and the Children's Emigration Homes' <<http://www.bifhsgo.ca/pdf/jtmiddlemore.pdf>> [accessed 14 March 2007] pp.1-9.

In 1870 Leonard Shaw an evangelical businessman in Manchester, extended his work in the ragged schools and set up shelters for homeless boys and girls. He then prepared them for a life in Canada and arranged for their emigration using Annie Macpherson's organisation to do so.⁵⁶ From 1852 Mrs Smyly was working to help the poor in Dublin. After first opening a school where the children were not only taught but also given food, she opened a home for boys and later one for girls. From 1870 she too was arranging for children to emigrate to Canada with the help of the Annie Macpherson organisation.⁵⁷ In Scotland William Quarrier was doing the same. He began caring for destitute children in Glasgow from the early 1870s. He appealed for support and soon was able to set up the Orphan Homes of Scotland. This was a self-contained village community about fifteen miles from Glasgow. Many of the children cared for there also emigrated to Canada.⁵⁸ These facts show how widespread was the problem and also how similar were the answers being found in many different parts of the country.

During the nineteenth century the railways were a fast expanding industry. Because of the nature of the work, the digging of tunnels, the laying of track and the dangers inherent in such fast moving vehicles, there were many fatalities amongst the workforce. It became apparent that care was needed for the children of those killed so in 1875 an orphanage was opened in Derby and in 1885 one in Woking. The children cared for were not destitute street children. However, with the father dead and

⁵⁶ 'Young Immigrants to Canada: Leonard K. Shaw', <<http://ist.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/children/Organizations/shaw.html>> [accessed 15 March 2007].

⁵⁷ 'Young Immigrants to Canada: Smyly Homes of Dublin, Ireland', <<http://ist.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/children/Organizations/smyly.htm>> [accessed 15 March 2007].

⁵⁸ Quarriers, <<http://www.quarriers.org.uk/about/history/index.php>> and <<http://www.quarriers.org.uk/about/history/canada.php>> [accessed 15 March 2007].

therefore no money coming into the house they could very easily have swelled those numbers. The homes were named The Railway Servants Orphanage and they were set up primarily for the children of the ordinary workers who were killed in service. Much of the money needed to fund them came from the railway men themselves.⁵⁹

All these examples show the scale of the problem of destitution and its effect on children. They also show the amount of help that was being poured out to try to address it. At times it must have seemed to them that they were only touching the tip of the iceberg, but as the years passed each of the societies did reach a vast number of children. Many children were given a start in life that they could not have imagined when they were living on the streets. Whether there were more destitute boys than girls it has been hard thus far to establish. It may be so since most of the work seems to have started with first establishing a home for boys and then, as and when money was available, one for girls. Of the work detailed above the Farningham homes, Fegan's and Baring Young cared only for boys. All of them except Spurgeon's had an emigration policy. Most of the homes were run on the system of caring for the children in smaller groups; here an exception was Fegan's.

The following chapters will give a detailed analysis of five of the organisations which began in the second half of the nineteenth century and of the people involved. They represent samples of the vast amount of care and concern and give a comprehensive indication to the motivation, the methods and the end result of the schemes.

⁵⁹ Barbara Blandford Musson, *A Real Railway Child* (Derby: University of Derby, 1996), pp.8-9.

Chapter 7

'These Little Ones': from criminality to honesty

The Children's Home – Dr Stephenson

Thomas Bowman Stephenson (1839–1912) was the seventh child of John and Mary Stephenson. John was a Wesleyan Methodist minister whose calling meant that he had to move to a different town every two or three years. More often than not ministers did not have a choice as to where they went, the final decision being made by the annual Wesleyan Methodist Conference. Stephenson, therefore, spent his childhood moving from one place to the next, mainly in the industrial north. In so doing, from the relative comfort of his own home, he would no doubt have become aware of the poverty of many people. It is highly likely that he saw ragged children working to help the family budget, whilst he was still at school.

At the age of twelve Stephenson found his own Christian faith and he described the happiness brought to his parents as a result:

When the meeting was over, and my young heart palpitating with its new joy, I ran home, and there I found my father and mother, who stood with clasped hands, and with tears of joy running down their faces, as they thanked God for the surrender which their youngest child had made to the Saviour King.¹

Despite the pressure sometimes brought to bear by evangelical parents² there is no indication that any undue pressure had been put on him to make this decision.

¹ William Bradfield, *The Life of Thomas Bowman Stephenson founder of The Children's Home and of the Wesley Deaconess Institute* (London: Kelly, 1913), p.23.

² Doreen Rosman, *Evangelicals and Culture* (London: Croom Helm, c1984), (Rosman points out the pressure put on children of evangelical parents to be converted), p.101.

Stephenson's conversion seems to have happened naturally as a result of his being surrounded by a loving example and the opportunity to hear and learn about God – principles he advocated when he began his own work with destitute children.

As Stephenson grew older he felt that instead of studying law he must give his life in full time Christian service and in 1859 he was interviewed for the ministry of the Wesleyan Methodist church. Nehemiah Curnock, who later wrote Stephenson's biography, was one of the young men who went to London at the same time for interview. He recalled that a group of the interviewees went out into the streets to hold an open-air Christian meeting. After walking down many side alleyways, one young man procured a chair on which he stood and began to sing. At first a tobacconist heckled the group, and for a while it looked as if the crowd that had gathered would turn nasty. However, a young street urchin sprang to the singer's defence and made the crowd laugh instead, so enabling the impromptu service to continue. Curnock wrote:

little did any of us dream that that London street-boy was the first of a long succession of children whom the singing preacher within a few years was to captivate ... the singer was Thomas Bowman Stephenson.'³

After his acceptance into the ministry of the Methodist Church Stephenson first went to Norwich, then to Manchester from where, at the age of twenty-five, he was ordained. From Manchester he moved to Bolton where he met James Barlow, who a few years later was to have such an impact on his work as will emerge later in this chapter. During this time he married and his only daughter Dora was born.

³ Nehemiah Curnock, *The History of the Children's Home, Orphanage and Refuge* (London: Kelly, 1891), p.5.

In his work Stephenson was an innovator from the start. In Norwich he hired a theatre where he preached to those who felt more at home in that atmosphere than in a church. In Manchester he made himself unpopular with the wealthy mill owners because he 'gave too much time to the wrong sort of people' 'the lower orders' as they were described.⁴ Stephenson felt great concern for the considerable number of poor people who seemed to know nothing of Christianity. He also angered the mill owners when, during the civil war in America, he spoke in support of the armies of Northern States who were fighting to emancipate the slaves in the Southern States. During the war, cotton was not being exported and this was badly affecting the pockets of the mill owners.⁵

Some of the church members found other reasons to criticise him. For example, change in the way the services were conducted was frowned on. Instead of taking the first part of the service from the lectern and going into the pulpit for the sermon as was the common practice, Stephenson went into the pulpit for most of the service. He had noticed that the children in the balcony could not see him at the lectern and he wanted to make the service more interesting for them.⁶ Actions of this kind showed his concern for children and demonstrated that he considered their welfare to be important. From Manchester Stephenson moved to Bolton where he continued trying new methods of reaching a wider audience of people. He instituted Saturday night programmes of music and recitation, open-air services, a savings bank and a circuit magazine. He also became more and more aware of the extreme poverty of so many people and especially of the destitute children. Later when he was beginning his work

⁴ Cyril Davey, *A Man for all children* (London: Epworth Press, 1968), p.23.

⁵ Davey, p.24.

⁶ Davey, p.23.

in London he told some friends that if he had stayed in Bolton he 'had thought of doing something for the children'.⁷

In 1868 Stephenson accepted an offer to become a minister in Leeds but instead found himself sent by the Wesleyan Methodist Conference to London. His appointment was to the Waterloo Road Chapel in the Lambeth circuit. This Church was on the edge of the notorious 'New Cut', which was an area of dingy courts and alleyways. It was a very overcrowded district on the south side of the river. When many houses were demolished to make way for the building of Waterloo railway station the displaced people were crammed into the remaining houses. In his convocation lecture of 1954 Rev. John Litten, (1878–1954), a former Principal of the National Children's Home, wrote, 'Homelessness, poverty, drunkenness, debauchery, cruelty, and despair – it was a grim array he had to face in the Lambeth of his time.'⁸ On learning where he was to go Stephenson wrote of his misgivings in his personal journal:

When I received the appointment my heart shrank very much from going ... the Chapel and the neighbourhood that will be under my special care are perhaps as bad as can be found out of the bottomless pit'. Nevertheless, he said, 'there is this one thing that does invite me – that I shall have to 'go to seek that which is lost'.⁹

On arrival he continued with his innovations and began open-air services on the patch of ground in front of the chapel. He built a platform against the wall, set up a light to illuminate the area and applied to the Methodist central office for funds to buy chairs

⁷ Davey, p.33.

⁸ John H. Litten, *I Sat where They Sat* (London: National Children's Home, c1954), p.19.

⁹ Litten, p.19 (This quotation is taken from the Authorised version of the Bible, St Luke ch. 19 v.10. The actual verse reads 'For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost').

for the people to sit on. When his wife said it looked like a 'cheap-jack's stall' he replied that this was what many of the people of the area liked to see and that 'if they will listen to the buskers they'll listen to me.'¹⁰ Curnock wrote that from these services Stephenson was able to draw people into the church itself.¹¹

In this deprived area of London, Stephenson found what was to become his life's work. The most tragic sight he had encountered was the plight of the abandoned and destitute children. Bradfield recorded these words which show the full depth of his feelings:

I soon saw little children in a condition which made my heart bleed. There they were, ragged, shoeless, filthy, their faces pinched with hunger, and premature wretchedness staring out of their too bright eyes, and I began to feel that now my time had come. Here were my poor little brothers and sisters sold to Hunger and the Devil, and I could not be free of their blood if I did not try at least to save some of them.¹²

His concern was to save the children from destitution not only of body but also of soul. Here he gives an indication that destitution and criminality were linked in his mind; because of their bodily needs and lack of Christian teaching they were 'sold to the Devil'. However he did not begin the work with the approval of his entire congregation or the encouragement of the Methodist Circuit to which the church belonged. It was thought by some that he was spending too much time on this project and not enough on the work for which the church paid him.

¹⁰ Davey, pp.31-32.

¹¹ Curnock, p.7.

¹² Bradfield, p.78.

A book which greatly influenced Stephenson was *Praying and Working* by Rev. William Fleming Stevenson. The book contained the story of the German Inner Mission with its training scheme for Deacons and Deaconesses. It also detailed how Dr Wichern at the Rauhe Haus (Rough House) near Hamburg was working to save destitute boys. This account was to inspire not only Stephenson but many other child savers who began similar work in Britain. It has already been noted that Mary Carpenter's work was influenced by Wichern's work in Germany.

Discussing the work of child rescue in Europe, especially in places where war had destroyed people's lives, Stevenson maintained that 'At every point of trial it would seem God has some servant waiting, with kindly offices and sympathy'.¹³ The man in this situation was Wichern. He wrote that Wichern put forward statistics to prove that putting criminal children in prison did not reform them. If the children were to be saved they had to be removed from a home-life where poverty and unhealthy influences would inevitably lead them into a life of crime. Wichern believed that the family was 'God's own order, and the natural place for a child'.¹⁴ Therefore when the Rauhe Haus came into being it was to be with small groups of boys. With his mother he began by taking in destitute boys to live with them. In this way they were able to give individual attention to each boy. The boys were described as the very worst characters. Stevenson wrote that they were 'young incorrigibles, given up by everybody'.¹⁵ Applications came and soon there were more boys than Wichern could accommodate; twelve being the maximum number the house would hold. He considered extending the house to take in more but felt that by doing so the boys

¹³ William F. Stevenson, *Praying and Working: being some account of what men can do when in earnest* (London: Alexander Strahan, 1866), p.68.

¹⁴ Stevenson, p.79.

¹⁵ Stevenson, p.97.

would lose the individual care they needed. Instead he built another house in which twelve boys could live with a young Christian man to care for them. As the need arose he built more houses and so the prototype of the family system came into being. Wichern believed the success of the family system was to be found in the love and loyalty which bound the boys together. They were able to celebrate their own festivals, share in each other's happiness and help each other when the need arose. This, Stevenson said, was 'like the opening of a new world to the poor children of the streets'.¹⁶

Two young men who were to feature significantly in the work of child saving with Stephenson were Alfred Mager (1837-1915) and Francis Horner (1847-1930). Mager, aged thirty-two, was employed by the London and Westminster bank, and Horner, aged twenty-two, had come from Dublin to London to begin a business career. The two were part of a group of men who led Sunday services and ran a 'Mission Room' in the lodging houses in Mint Street, Southwark. The Constabulary Commissioners' report on the system of lodging houses referred to the inhabitants as 'the worst characters' and 'crowds of low and vicious persons'.¹⁷ Horner, later described the district where they worked as 'one of the most notorious and evil districts in London, the hiding place of thieves of all descriptions and swarming with the lost children of the streets.'¹⁸

Since arriving in London an idea had been growing in Stephenson's mind to provide a home for these 'lost children' where they could be cared for, educated and trained in

¹⁶ Stevenson, p.149.

¹⁷ Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and the London Poor* 'Of the Low Lodging Houses' <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/MayLond.html>> [accessed 28 October 2006], Cht. 13 pp. 5-6.

¹⁸ Francis Horner, *Shadow and Sun* (London: Epworth Press, c.1919), p.9.

useful work. He believed that the street children of London were in as great a need as the destitute boys in Hamburg. He decided to discuss the idea with Mager who immediately wrote this letter which was the beginning of the project:

Dear Horner,

Come round to tea with us. Mr Stephenson has called to talk with you and me upon a new and interesting subject.

Yours affectionately,

Alfred W. Mager.¹⁹

To verify the seriousness of the situation, or to see if it did indeed exist, the three men made many excursions at night to find out how and where the boys lived. Horner described how one evening, when he was returning home from a meeting, he nearly fell over what he thought was a bundle of rags on the pavement. When he shone a light on it, the rags began to move and soon 'six ragged barefooted filthy little lads' stood there. They were lying over an iron grating having a 'smell and a warmth' from a basement kitchen. Horner related how he went back with them to their 'doss', which was a wharf under London Bridge where there were hundreds of empty barrels. As he turned to leave, one of the boys put his head out of his barrel and said, 'do what you can for us, guvnor!'²⁰ Stephenson, when making an appeal for help, referred to the incident saying 'Could any appeal be more plaintive or powerful. We will not fail to act on it.'²¹ In later life Horner wrote 'There were not hundreds, but thousands, of such boys in London alone. Ownerless starving dogs abounded, and ownerless, starving children, too. There was little evidence of any public conscience about

¹⁹ Horner, p.11.

²⁰ Horner, pp.19-23.

²¹ Horner, p.23.

them.’²² As has already been stated however, there was at this time a growing concern for the children and their life-style. The sheer numbers must have made the task seem overwhelming and almost impossible.

Of Stephenson, Horner wrote that he ‘had the gift of imagination ... He saw a Christian citizen in the ragged starved form and cunning eyes of the “City Arab” and, thank God, saw that imagining come true.’²³ From the methods used in caring for and training the children it is clear that their idea of a Christian citizen was an honest, hard-working person who lived by Christian principles and who was a loyal citizen of the country in which he lived. Stephenson said that they tried to make the boys understand that to ‘be straightforward, honest – in a word, manly, is essential to being really godly.’²⁴

Stephenson, Horner and Mager decided to go ahead with the project and rented a house at 8 Church Street, Lambeth. The premises were very poor, just a small cottage with a stable attached. The house contained one room downstairs with a loft above. The rent was £40 for a year. It was decided that the stable could be turned into a dining room; the downstairs room could become the living room and the loft the bedroom. Not just the stable but the downstairs room as well smelled of donkey, and everywhere was filthy, but with much hard work it soon became habitable. On the 9th July 1869 the first two boys were admitted and a week later an inaugural meeting was held to promote the work. Twenty-five people crowded into the small premises, showing that there was much interest in the project. The statement printed on the

²² Horner, p.24.

²³ Horner, pp.6-7.

²⁴ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives, D541.D2/1/1), p.3, [hereafter to be referred to as LUSCA].

promotional pamphlet – what we would now call a mission statement – indicated that their aim was ‘To rescue children who, through the death or vice or extreme poverty of their parents, are in danger of falling into criminal ways.’²⁵ Again the perceived link between poverty and criminality is clear. In his speech at the meeting Stephenson stated that there were thousands of destitute children in London who were in great need of the services of The Children’s Home. Horner later wrote ‘Surely ours was a humble beginning in the face of such great and crying need!’²⁶

The link between destitution and criminality was again emphasised when, on Monday 28th February 1870, nearly eight months after the project began, a public meeting was held at the Waterloo Road Chapel where Stephenson was the minister. One of the speakers put forward this proposal:

that this meeting considering how many children are living in circumstances which render their lapse into criminal habits a matter of the highest probability, and believing that the best hope of rescuing them lies in their being removed from their present surroundings and placed under the influences of a godly household, rejoices in the establishment of ‘The Children’s Home’ expresses an earnest hope in its speedy enlargement and commends it to the sympathy of the Christian public and especially of the Methodist Church.²⁷

The children it was noted, lacked care, parental influence, home life, food, clothing and all the basic necessities of life and so because of this they were considered to be more likely to be led into unlawful activity. The rescue therefore, was as much to

²⁵ Bradfield, p.85.

²⁶ Horner, p.29.

²⁷ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), p.51.

save them from moral and spiritual destitution and from criminal actions, as it was to save them from physical destitution.

At first only boys were admitted, but Stephenson knew that the problem existed for girls also and he determined to take them in as soon as they had the premises.

Therefore from the beginning it was called 'The Children's Home' and not 'Boy's Home'. Moreover Stephenson would not have any of the names in current usage put on the home – refuge, asylum, or shelter – precisely because he wanted them to feel they had a home where they belonged. The name was not changed to the more well-known name of The National Children's Home until the twentieth century.

The first house in Church Street could only accommodate ten boys and it soon became apparent that larger premises were needed. During the first year the adjoining house was rented and then thirty boys could be cared for, albeit in very cramped conditions. Stephenson, however, had a vision of a number of houses, together with a schoolroom, a chapel and workshops in which the boys and girls could live, have an education and learn a trade. Writing a century later, in the centenary history of the venture Alan Jacka observed:

what was offered these children was food, because they were hungry; clothing and shelter because they were ragged and homeless; education because they were ignorant (and could not read the Bible); some sort of livelihood, because earning money is better than stealing it.²⁸

²⁸ Alan Jacka, *The story of the Children's Home* (London: National Children's Home, 1969), p.13.

Speaking on this latter subject Stephenson had said, 'it is useless to preach honesty to a thief, unless you are prepared with some method of helping him to get an honest living.'²⁹

Proceedings began and continued throughout on a businesslike footing. Committee meetings were held weekly and minutes of each recorded. In the five weeks since the opening five more boys had been admitted, making seven in all. The business of the first committee meeting on 17th August 1869 went as follows: it was stated that a man and his wife were to be employed as 'master and matron' and they were to have a salary of 26s. 6d. per week. It was proposed that a carpenter be employed to 'construct a framework for a circular saw'. The accounts were discussed and it was agreed that an account be opened at the bank in the name of 'The Children's Home'. A decision was taken that parents and friends of the children should be allowed to visit them on the first Monday of each month. Mr Charles Poulton was to be asked to join the committee and it was agreed that the committee would meet every Tuesday evening at five o'clock.³⁰

Each week the committee discussed the situation of the boys who had asked to be admitted. In extreme cases, even when the place was full it would seem they tried to squeeze one more in. For example in October one boy was refused because of lack of room. However the circumstances of a second boy were discussed and an agreement reached that he would be admitted if room could be made for him. The reason this was thought necessary was that his mother, who was a widow, was unable to control him. He was said to be – 'thoroughly untrustworthy being addicted to lying and theft

²⁹ Annual Report 1870, 'Concerning these little ones' by T.B. Stephenson (LUSCA, D.541.D1/1/1), p.3.

³⁰ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), pp.1-3.

and roved the streets all day with companions like himself.’³¹ Clearly an important factor here was to save this boy from becoming a habitual criminal and also to remove him from his dubious associates. By the 3rd November the Home was completely full and so no other applications could be considered.

A constant concern for the committee was the lack of room and more suitable premises were actively sought. At the beginning of October it was decided that a shed for washing was to be constructed and then erected ‘upon the leads of the house’.³² A week later it was agreed that the yard be covered over in order to provide shelter for the boys in the winter. In January 1870 a decision was taken to rent the house next door³³ and in February a donation of £50 was received in order to furnish it.³⁴

The Children’s Home was started without any major capital. However, at the inaugural meeting, six people each promised to donate £20, a generous sum for the time. At first the money came in very small amounts, but Horner wrote that they were ‘the droppings of a shower’.³⁵ He stated that their first legacy was from a young girl who, when she was dying, asked that the contents of her moneybox be sent to the Home. The amount was 3s. 4½d; he also recalled that their first collecting box was in the refreshment room at Waterloo Station.³⁶ All the donations of money were recorded in the minute book, as was the expenditure. Gifts of clothing and other goods were also listed with grateful thanks. They lived very much by faith, never

³¹ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.H2/1/1), [in order that individual children should not be identified no page numbers will be recorded when referring to the Admissions book, the Canadian registers or Mager’s notebook. This is due to the archive’s confidentiality requirement].

³² Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), p.17.

³³ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.20.

³⁴ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.46.

³⁵ Horner, p.34.

³⁶ Horner, pp.34-35.

sure where the money would come from; but as Stephenson wrote 'the money invariably arrived, as soon as we could no longer do without it.'³⁷ The decision to rely on God to supply whatever was needed was taken by most of the philanthropists studied; as was the decision not to allow any debt to occur. At the end of the first year Stephenson wrote:

We believed God's hand was in the enterprise when we commenced it, and it is impossible for us to doubt it now that another twelve month's work is done. We have had such marvellous proofs of God's kind guiding, that we joyfully exclaim, 'This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in *our* eyes.'³⁸

From March 1871 a magazine *The Children's Advocate* was produced monthly, its aim being not only to raise money, but also to keep the supporters of the Home informed of all developments. Stephenson edited the paper and wrote the leading article, which was followed by other articles, a short story, or a poem. A list of contributions received was always included, with thanks to the people involved. These gifts, received for example in October 1870, ranged from one shilling to five pounds. Also mentioned and given thanks for were the donations of goods which included; material, clothing, handkerchiefs, potatoes, jars of preserves and books.³⁹

Annual reports were prepared and published; the early ones being mainly written and edited by Stephenson. In them he gave a clear insight into his vision for the future of the boys and girls, and what he believed their prospects would be if left on the streets. Although Stephenson had vision he was also a practical man who did not try to solve

³⁷ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D.541.D2/1/1), p.1.

³⁸ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D.541.D2/1/1) (The quotation is from the Authorised version of the Bible, Psalm 118 v.23), p.1.

³⁹ *The Children's Advocate* no.1 March 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.7.

the problem at a stroke. He wrote 'the experiment must be made unpretentiously, and allowed to develop itself by a natural and healthy growth.' There must be a 'definite plan of working' which must be kept to so that when the project grew bigger only 'slight modifications' would be needed; 'the accounts, though comparatively small, must be kept as exactly as though each pound were a thousand.'⁴⁰ The records of the Home accounts are clear and well maintained demonstrating that these aims were carried through. As the Home grew in size the annual reports contained not only information from each branch, but also a full list of monetary donations received through the year from churches in the Wesleyan Methodist circuits of Britain. As with all reports of this nature the information is very subjective giving mainly one point of view. The reports were intended to show the positive side of the project and keep the donating public informed of where their money was being spent. However insight into the way the founders were thinking is also to be gleaned.

Finding the right staff for the work was not an easy task. A domestic servant was employed at the end of August, but after a few weeks she was considered to be 'unequal to her duties'.⁴¹ At the end of September she was given notice and another was advertised for. Unfortunately the first master and matron employed to be 'Father and Mother' to the boys were also found to be unsuitable. The master had been charged with cruelty, kicking the boys and viciously pulling another one's ears. It was also reported to the committee that the washerwoman, and a girl employed to work within the Home, accused the master of 'gross indecency'. It was decided to dismiss the man and his wife on the charges of cruelty and only bring in the second charge if the master declined to resign. This it was thought would spare the feelings

⁴⁰ Annual Report 1870 (LUSCA. D.541.D1/1/1), p.4.

⁴¹ Minutes of Committee, book 1(LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), p.14.

of the matron. When the couple were interviewed the master's attitude was said to be 'offensive and menacing' making the meeting very unpleasant. Although he did not deny the charges he did try to justify his actions to the boys. He did not believe that he had been cruel or too severe. He said he had often treated the lads more roughly without anyone complaining about it. It was, he maintained, the fault of the committee for introducing such 'bad characters' into the Home. The couple made many complaints, one being that the committee had often interfered with the way they carried out their duties, and another that they were not allowed sufficient input into the decisions made regarding the running of the Home. They also made accusations of impropriety against another member of staff who came in to help with the day-to-day running of the Home. This latter accusation, however, on further investigation, was disproved.⁴²

The committee finally decided to interview the master on his own and put to him the report of the accusations of 'gross indecency'. The man immediately became less aggressive but he said he wished to meet his accusers. This was agreed and the meeting subsequently carried out in the presence of the committee. However details of this enquiry were not entered into the minute book. Instead this report dated 4th May 1870 is noted: 'Full notes of the proceedings were taken at the time, and as it was determined not to have them entered herein they are preserved, and with them the record of the committee's decision on the subject.' This does however give an insight into Victorian evangelical morality. Whatever the 'indecency' might or might not have been it was not to be allowed to sully the work being done with the children. It

⁴² Minutes of Committee, book 1(LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), pp.63-71.

must therefore not be recorded alongside the record of this.⁴³ With this the employment of the first couple ended.

After this unfortunate beginning things still did not go smoothly. The next person to be appointed had been a master at Battersea Ragged School and was thought to be very suitable. His wife was to be appointed with him and their salary was to be £40 per annum plus board and lodging. This was a considerable reduction to that paid to the first couple. Also only one month's notice on either side was to be given and not three months as had been agreed previously. It would seem a lesson had been learned from the difficulties encountered in dismissing the first couple. Once again the committee found that things were not going well, or as they would want them to for the welfare of the boys. A month after their appointment the second master and his wife were proving unsatisfactory. Details of all expenses, both in connection with the work done by the boys as well as household expenditure, were expected to be kept. However it was found that the way the accounts were kept was 'slovenly'.⁴⁴ The committee discussed the matter with the couple and on two further occasions gave them another chance. Eventually when there was no improvement the couple were sent for in order to give them notice. On this occasion the master was absent without leave having neglected to make any provision for the boys to be supervised in his absence. With this the committee dismissed the couple immediately. Apart from the last offence the charges against the couple were that he was 'unpunctual, indolent and generally inefficient and did not attend to the directions given to him', and his wife, although it was agreed that she really did try, was 'not equal to her duties'.⁴⁵

⁴³ Minutes of Committee, book 1(LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), pp.71-72.

⁴⁴ Minutes of Committee, book 1(LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), p.80.

⁴⁵ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), p.84.

The third master and matron proved to be more successful. It was agreed to offer the position to a man who had been employed by them in various ways over a number of months. He and his wife were to be offered £25 per annum with board and lodging for themselves and their children. They would have their own family apartment but the younger boys would join with the boys of the Home for school lessons and also be 'subject to the discipline of the house'.⁴⁶ Although there was a big reduction in the amount of salary offered, free board and lodging for the whole family would make up for it somewhat. Three months after the appointment the committee agreed to retain the services of this man and his wife and the salary was set at £26 per annum to be paid weekly. The list of their duties was reiterated which included: keeping a day-to-day account of all the money that was spent and recording the gifts received; 'general superintendence' of the Home; management of the work done by the boys and recording work done and materials used. The matron's duties were to see to all the domestic arrangements, mend or make the boys' clothes and in all ways act as a 'good mother'. Discipline was in the hands of the master and matron but if any serious breaches occurred then it was to be reported to the committee.⁴⁷ This was a serious commitment for a relatively small wage; dedication to the aims of the project would have been needed to fulfil it.

The first two boys to be admitted were George, who was ten years old, and Fred, twelve years old. They each had several brothers and sisters and, because their fathers were dead, their mothers were unable to provide for them. One of Fred's siblings was in a reformatory. Both boys were described as undersized and undernourished. Fred said he had earned what money he could 'selling matches' and as a 'mudlark'; both

⁴⁶ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), p.86.

⁴⁷ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.A1/1), pp.94-95.

activities being forms of begging. Mudlarks stood on the banks of the Thames and waited for someone to throw a penny into the mud and then they jumped in to find it. If they were successful they could keep it.

George's mother signed a piece of paper with a cross giving permission for him to be looked after at the Home.⁴⁸ This boy as he grew up was so proud of being the first boy to be taken in, that until he died he always used the signature G. Oliver No.1.⁴⁹ He was said to be 'hot tempered ... fairly truthful and of good intellectual capacity'. He was among the first group of boys to go to Edgworth in 1872. When old enough, he was apprenticed as a carpenter and his record in 1878 was said to be 'good'.⁵⁰ Fred on the other hand, on entering the Home, was said to be 'wilful and quite beyond his mother's control'. It was written that he had 'led an Arab life in the street'. He left in April 1872 and returned in December 1873 when his mother went into the workhouse where she died shortly afterwards. In 1874 he was taken to Canada and his record in 1878 was said to be 'excellent'.⁵¹ Edgworth was the first branch opened outside London and details of this will be given later, as will the emigration of some of the children to Canada.

There was no election system for admittance to the Home. Stephenson stated that they only looked at the circumstances of the child and tried as far as possible to have an open door for those whose need was desperate. To use his very descriptive language 'Is the child in circumstances which make it highly probable that he will

⁴⁸ Terry Philpot, *Action for Children: The Story of Britain's Foremost Children's Charity* (Oxford: Lion, 1994), p.27.

⁴⁹ Philpot, p.22.

⁵⁰ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.H2/1/1) [the names of George and Fred have been published in histories of the Home and permission was sought to include them in this thesis].

⁵¹ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.H2/1/1).

become a waif of society, and float down the swollen stream of the city's vice and crime?'⁵² It did not matter whether the boys were legitimate or not, nor whether they were clean. It is recorded that in the early days when space was at a premium, one boy was turned away because he was too clean and there was just no room for a boy who looked as if he had someone else to care for him. However some time later when he was seen as ragged and dirty as any other street child he was questioned about it. His reply was that he had cleaned himself up and borrowed some clothes that were better than his own rags because he thought this would give him a greater chance of being taken in. Horner wrote 'you will be glad to know our door opened to him the next time he knocked at it!'⁵³

An analysis of the information given on the first fifty boys to be admitted gives the following details:

Of the parents:

- 30 fathers were dead
- 2 had deserted the family
- 1 was in prison
- 2 were drunkards
- 2 were unknown
- 13 no comment given.

Of the children:

- 6 were illegitimate
- 6 were legitimate
- 38 not stated

⁵² *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D.541.D2/1/1), p.2.

⁵³ Horner, p.15.

- 8 were described as ‘arabs’ or living on the streets.
- 4 had been in prison
- In 7 instances it was said that if the boy was left to his own devices he would ‘go to bad’

The language used about the boys and their backgrounds sounds strange at times to modern ears but nevertheless it is very descriptive. One father was described as having ‘loose habits’ another as a ‘scamp’. In three cases only was the father’s work mentioned; one was a ‘bootmaker’, one a ‘jobber’ and the third a ‘blind jobber’. In some cases both parents were dead. However when a mother was left to look after her children alone she was not able to earn enough to feed them. Some mothers too were described as drunkards and one was said to be a prostitute. The age range of the boys was quite varied, the oldest being fourteen and the youngest only four. Although some birth dates are given, many are approximations. Many of the children did not know how old they were and because of deprivation it was not obvious to see.⁵⁴ From these statistics it can be deduced that all the boys were in need of care. All were destitute, many had been badly treated and some had been totally deserted.

In the records of each boy some comments about their behaviour, general demeanour and health were given. For example one boy was described as having a ‘Dull phlegmatic temperament’ and being ‘of less than average intellectual capacity’; another was as ‘sharp, pugnacious, [and] hardy as the streets where he lived and slept could make him’ but his ‘disposition is grateful’ and he had ‘much improved in every aspect’. However another boy was described as having ‘dirty habits’ and an ‘ungrateful disposition’. Many of the comments on health were what could be

⁵⁴ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.H2/1/1).

expected, 'not good', 'half starved, delicate of badly formed chest and likely to become consumptive', 'utterly neglected' and of 'abject appearance'.⁵⁵

Stephenson had a grading system whereby he kept a record of how the boys progressed whilst in their care and afterwards:

- Criminal: such as have violated the law of the country.
- Bad: thoroughly idle, ungovernable, vicious.
- Moderate: Good citizens, such as would compare not unfavourably with the average of the working classes, though wanting some elements of stable character.
- Good: Satisfactory both in regard of work and character.
- Excellent: Distinguished by superiority of character, thrifty, diligent, strictly trustworthy, and in some cases decidedly Christian.⁵⁶

In September 1878 all the children were given a grade whether they were in England or Canada. The details for the first fifty boys, nine years after the opening of the home, are as follows:

- 8 excellent
- 20 good
- 12 moderate
- 6 no comment
- 2 had absconded
- 1 employed by the home
- 1 dead

⁵⁵ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D.541.H2/1/1).

⁵⁶ Annual Reports 1870-1879, 'Quarterly Budget of News, February 1878 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.6.

However in one case the grading changed from good to bad a year later.⁵⁷

It is clear that in the beginning the boys taken in were those who were living on the streets; those who were ill-treated and starving; and those who were likely to get into trouble with the law. Siblings were not necessarily admitted at the same time even though the family might be destitute. The first Home would only hold ten boys and so space was at a premium. In August 1869 one boy was admitted and his brother a month later. However they were not kept together because the first one went to Edgworth for a while and then to Canada in October 1872. His brother also went to Canada but not until May 1873. Both boys were said to be clever although they had not attended school very regularly and in 1878 their record was good.⁵⁸ The separating of siblings was a common trait with many of the child savers and must have added to the feeling of loneliness felt by many. When there was not enough space to admit a boy sometimes another solution was found. It is recorded that in March 1871 for one boy, a sum of two shillings a week was to be paid to the person looking after him for his 'sustenance' until room could be found for him.⁵⁹

On entry to the Home the boys were first bathed and then examined by a doctor. If they had anything infectious they were sent to the hospital before coming into contact with the other children. If they were pronounced healthy they were photographed and given fresh clothing, a set for everyday wear and one for 'Sundays and holidays'. From the way this is reported it would seem that the boys were photographed in the clothing they arrived in. Stephenson wrote that the child bid 'farewell to the rags of

⁵⁷ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D541. H2/1/1).

⁵⁸ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D541.H2/1/1).

⁵⁹ Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D.541.A1/2), p.5.

his roving life'.⁶⁰ Photograph albums of the children are not available in the archives and I have not found evidence that they were used for publicity purposes, although this might have been so. Certainly in later years, photographs of happy, smiling, well-looked after children were used to promote the work of the Home. The children were not dressed in a uniform but in order to keep the cost down it is stated there was inevitably some 'uniformity of dress'.⁶¹

There was an organised and well-structured regime, the day's routine being recorded as follows:

6.00 am rise

6.30–7.30 work

7.30–8.30 breakfast and prayers

8.30–11.30 school or work

11.30–12.30 exercise

12.30–2.00 dinner

2.00–5.00 school or work

5.00–6.00 tea

6.00–8.00 an hour's work and an hour's relaxation

8.00 pm bed

One half of the boys attended school in the morning and the other half in the afternoon. This routine was already in place when the premises were very cramped and would only hold thirty boys.⁶²

⁶⁰ Annual Report for 1869 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), pp.5-6.

⁶¹ Annual Report for 1869 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), pp.5-6.

⁶² *The Children's Advocate* no.1, March 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.2.

Stephenson believed that corporal punishment should be used only when absolutely necessary; 'the lowest degree possible'⁶³ were the words he used. In recent television programmes it has been said that to encourage good behaviour and discourage bad behaviour in a child they should be put on the 'naughty stair' until they have calmed down. Stephenson was ahead of his time in this for, when writing about discipline, he said 'some of them [the boys] being placed in positions of special trust, while idle and disobedient boys are made to sit upon "The bad boy's chair" and watch the rest at work.'⁶⁴ The boys were encouraged to treat the place as a home and so the doors were not kept locked. They were sent on errands, being allowed the normal freedom of children in their own home.

In his account, Horner did not pretend that there were no problems with the boys at the beginning. He said there were often fights and riots, but that it was only to be expected for 'these wild children, deserted by all, had been used to fight for their existence'.⁶⁵ In September just two months after the first two boys were admitted Stephenson made a statement to the committee about the 'regulation and discipline of the Home.' He began by saying that the behaviour of the boys had overall been good, far better in fact than could have been expected. However there were times when they found the restraint and discipline 'irksome'. He said that it was important to note that although prompt obedience was essential it could only be achieved by a 'firm but kind bearing to the lads'.⁶⁶ So in order to ensure that the boys obeyed the regulations, which were needed for the smooth running of the home, firmness with kindness were to be the watchwords.

⁶³ Minutes of Committee, book 1 'Report on the Annual Meeting 30th January 1871' (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.111.

⁶⁴ Annual Report for 1869 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.7.

⁶⁵ Horner, p.36.

⁶⁶ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), pp.8-9.

The principle of having the children in small family groups was to be aimed for because it was believed that this was the best environment for them. Stephenson wrote that it would 'render the maintenance of discipline possible without crushing the spontaneity and vivacity of child-life.'⁶⁷ He believed that to put large numbers of children together resulted in having to impose a military style discipline where 'the spontaneity of child-life must be vigorously repressed, or nothing like order is possible'.⁶⁸ Although his ideas were based on the work done by Dr Wichern in Hamburg, he felt that there were one or two changes to the system that were necessary for the work in England. The first was the importance of having a 'Motherly or Sisterly influence'. He said 'the advantage of having a Christian woman's influence upon children is worth all the extra trouble and anxiety'⁶⁹ of finding suitable women to fill this position. The second change was to be in the number of children in each family. Stephenson felt that economically twelve was too small a number in England because he believed the expense per head was greater than in Germany. He therefore proposed that twenty was the best possible number for their purposes. Family life, which was believed to be the basis of a good Christian upbringing, was to be created for the previously uncared-for children. On this subject Stephenson said 'Thus family life and influence (which are God's method for training the human race) would be secured for the children.'⁷⁰

One idea that was not considered was to put boys and girls in the same family group. Girls could not be taken in until a house was available for them. Stephenson made an interesting comment when he was explaining his 'family system'. He said how

⁶⁷ Annual Report for 1869 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.5.

⁶⁸ *The Children's Advocate*, May 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.2.

⁶⁹ *The Children's Advocate*, May 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.2.

⁷⁰ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D541 D2/1/1), p.3.

important the motherly influence was on the boys, but he went on to say 'of course, in the case of girls' families, the difficulty is naturally lessened, inasmuch as no male superintendence is required.'⁷¹ From this we can pick up on the Victorian belief of the centrality of a woman's place within the home. Boys would need teaching masculine attributes as well as having a 'mother's' care, but girls only needed a woman's example. It is not clear whether the children were divided into this ideal of a family whilst in the first premises. The accommodation was very cramped so it would have been difficult. Stephenson believed that he was a pioneer for this system in England. He said that other organisations had made the claim to run a family system but that the numbers in each group were too great for a genuine family system to work and he quoted figures of thirty and fifty in a group.⁷² It must nevertheless be said that even with twenty boys or girls in a family this was more than would be found in most normal families. It would however make it easier to give them more individual attention than children in large orphanages could receive.

The first annual meeting was held eighteen months after the Home opened. Stephenson reported that thirty-three children had been received. One had been 'reclaimed' by his family; the mother of another kept encouraging him to play truant so that eventually he had been told not to return; one had run away and another had left to take up an apprenticeship in the printing trade. He said that the one who ran away had an interesting case history. He was known as 'The Lord Mayor of Chequer-alley' and had lived a 'wandering life' since he was born. Stephenson said that the only way to keep him in the Home would be to lock him in, which was of course not to be contemplated because it was a home and not a prison. He believed that if there

⁷¹ *The Children's Advocate* May 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.2.

⁷² *The Children's Advocate* May 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.2.

had been a field or large playground attached then they might have been able to contain him. However as they had not he remarked that ‘the “Lord Mayor” could not find sphere enough for his arms and legs’ and so he left. He said they were watching out for him and when they were able to have better premises they might be able to ‘be of use to him’.⁷³ So at the time of the meeting there were twenty-nine boys resident, several being orphans and only two or three with both parents living. Mention was made of the problems that had been experienced in finding a reliable and trustworthy master and matron. Nevertheless Stephenson said that they had ‘complete confidence’ in the two now employed. He said that their biggest problem was the premises, which were very inadequate for their purpose – ‘They sheltered the children, but that was nearly all they could say’.⁷⁴ Stephenson made mention of the ‘religious feeling’ of the boys and said there was evidence of some such feeling and that if they had not been ‘deceived’ by the first two masters who had been employed, they would probably have had more success in that area.

Considering the scale of the problem with the huge number of destitute children reported to be living wild, this was a small beginning, only thirty boys being cared for in the first eighteen months. It certainly did not compare with the scale of growth in some of the other homes. Neither did it foreshadow the extent to which The Children’s Home would grow in the years to come. However personal attention could be achieved with these small numbers. Also, apart from lack of space, money had to be available because as already mentioned no debt was allowed to be incurred.

⁷³ *The Children’s Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.2.

⁷⁴ Minutes of Committee, book 1 ‘Report on the Annual Meeting 30th January 1871’ (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.111.

From the beginning bigger premises were believed to be a priority and the committee were continually looking for a better site. In March 1871 the first mention is made of the site at Bonner Road. It had been used by the Victoria Stone Company as a factory, and needed a lot of work to make it habitable. However, it was once remarked that ‘Mr Stephenson never sees any difficulty until he gets to the other side of it!’⁷⁵ The site comprised a row of terraced houses with a large courtyard at the back surrounded on three sides by tumbledown buildings, which it was envisaged would make workshops. In May 1871 an agreement was reached with the owners of the site and the rent was set at £220 per annum. The necessary alterations were agreed to, and so The Children’s Home opened in Bonner Road, Bethnal Green on 4th October 1871. This remained the headquarters of the Home until 1913.

When the children moved to Bonner Road the site must have seemed very spacious compared to the cramped premises in which the Home began two years previously. Stephenson was a very practical man and there are many stories told of the way he worked in the transformation of the buildings. One old boy once said ‘When I meet the Doctor in Heaven, if he has a pocket, I expect to see a two-foot rule sticking out of it!’⁷⁶ A good description of the layout was given in the *Children’s Advocate* November 1871. Walking through the gate soon after the opening and looking from right to left, this would be seen: in the first block was the children’s schoolroom with the Chapel above, next came the kitchen above which were bedrooms for the children and staff, a lavatory, playroom and dining room. The second block was to be the girls’ house and beneath the upper part was a covered play-ground for the children, included was also a bathroom and laundry. The third block held a carpenters shop

⁷⁵ Davey, p.57.

⁷⁶ Horner, pp.7-8.

above which were more bedrooms, lavatory, dining room and playroom as in the first block. The fourth block contained offices and a small infirmary. There were also bedrooms where the few girls lived until their own house was ready; these rooms were over a printing office and a stable for the donkey.⁷⁷ By the end of the first year there were sixty children being cared for in four separate households. Soon after the move to Bonner Road a girls' house was opened and so it became truly 'The Children's Home'.

In the Annual report for 1871 the names of the houses were given as follows:

Temperance House opened with money collected by C.G. in which twenty-one boys were resident. The Old House named in memory of the cottage where the work began. At first boys lived there but then it became a home for fifteen girls. Sunday School House was opened with money collected from Sunday school scholars from Methodist churches around the country. Twenty-one boys were resident in this house.⁷⁸ It was reported that a fourth house was soon to be opened, and in 1872 three more houses were opened making the premises almost complete.

Stephenson spelled out his vision of the family system working within The Children's Home in precise detail. There would be twenty children in each family with a master, matron and other helpers to care for them. They were all to consider themselves members of one family and the officers were to give the children the 'missing care of "father" and "mother"'. They were to care for the children in every way, someone being with them to supervise at all times. Neatness and cleanliness must be taught because, he said, unless they are watched and often helped 'children will not wash

⁷⁷ *The Children's Advocate* November 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.5.

⁷⁸ Annual Report 1871, Third paper concerning 'These Little Ones' (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), pp.4-5.

themselves cleanly' or dress themselves tidily. At mealtimes the children were to be allowed to be 'cheerful' but they must not be rude or boisterous. Corporal punishment must be kept to a minimum, and very bad behaviour must be reported to Stephenson himself.

To the officers themselves he gave this little homily,

Unless you realise that you are a Christian brotherhood, confederated for Christian purposes, you will surely fail. If you bring to the work the spirit of a hireling, you will not endure the toil, nor submit to the restrictions upon your liberty which are necessary in this enterprise. 'But I am persuaded better things of you'.⁷⁹

In this Stephenson spelt out the dedication that would be needed from everyone who became part of the work. He said that they must remember that they 'are not doing this work for the sake of a livelihood, but out of love for Christ and His little ones.' The officers were to have just one evening off a week but were on duty at all other times unless they asked special permission. Each family group was to respect the living space of the other groups and not encroach upon it. They must knock and wait to be invited in as would be expected in a normal family situation.⁸⁰ In many ways it was a very strict routine for the staff, but there are little pointers to show that everything was for the welfare of the children, who were the most important aspect of the enterprise. Although the spirit of the rules and method of care were in place from the beginning, it was not until the opening of the premises at Bonner Road with their much larger scope that they were able to be followed in their entirety. As Stephenson more than once remarked, the first premises were very inconvenient and not

⁷⁹ This quotation is from the Authorised version of the Bible, *Hebrews* ch.6 v.9 The actual quotation reads 'But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you'.

⁸⁰ *The Children's Advocate* July 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.4.

conducive to private family living. The regime for the staff was certainly a very strict one with complete dedication being expected. Stephenson gave his whole self to his work and he expected all who were associated with it to do the same.

In October 1871 the first girls were admitted and between then and 1873 twenty girls came into care. When the background of the girls is analysed much the same picture emerges as was the case with the boys. A number of them had brothers who were already in the Home and others had sisters who were also admitted. Their ages ranged from eight to fifteen although the majority were eleven to twelve years old. For some no age was given, but as I have already indicated many did not know how old they were and because of deprivation their age was not apparent. The majority had either only one parent or neither living.

In 1878, of the first fifty girls it is stated that:

- 9 were excellent
- 9 good
- 9 moderate
- 3 bad
- 3 dead
- 17 either no comment or a remark to the effect that they were now with 'friends'.

Girls were in need of care for many of the same reasons as the boys. However they were also considered to be in moral danger. A few examples will give a snapshot view of some of the problems:

- One girl was brought to the Home because she had been ‘turned out of doors’ on the previous day. She had wandered the streets through the cold November night, before being brought in.
- A girl whose mother was dead was said to be left to ‘run the streets’.
- The father of another was said to be a ‘drunken and depraved man’.
- One girl had begun to steal, a crime for which her mother and sister were in prison. However, one of her sisters, also admitted, was said not to be ‘involved in the family disgrace’. Of these two girls it was written the ‘father had lived a terrible life with the mother for nineteen years’.
- Yet another girl had this comment by her name, ‘father dead mother living (believe this woman to be thoroughly bad)’. There are notes detailing women who have been caught stealing, in this instance because no actual crime was specified it is highly probable that the ‘bad’ meant prostitution.⁸¹

To protect the girls in every sense was very important to the founders. Many would be very street-wise and no doubt some had already been led into prostitution in order to survive. No details of this aspect have been recorded. It is worth commenting on the future record of a couple of the girls. One eleven year old came into the Home in a much neglected state. It was said of her that she had been left to run the streets and ‘learn its evil ways’. In 1878 the report on her was not just excellent but ‘excellent in every way’.⁸² That is the only such comment I have found. On the other side of the coin, a girl who was taken at the age of fifteen does not seem to have fared so well. In August 1878 she wrote to Stephenson from Bradford asking for help, one presumes in the form of money, in order that she could bury her child. Her husband, she said, had

⁸¹ Admissions book 1 (LUSCA, D541.H2/1/1).

⁸² Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D541.H2/1/1).

left her destitute. Nothing is written about the outcome of this request.⁸³ Whether the length of time cared for had any influence on the outcome for the two girls is impossible to state.

From the beginning education was an important factor in the care of the children and facilities for this were put in place. The minutes of 13th October 1869 state that permission had been obtained to put a window in 'the schoolroom wall overlooking the yard of the adjoining house'.⁸⁴ Every inch of space seems to have been pressed into use. In November it was decided to employ a qualified teacher for the boys. Stephenson interviewed a lady in Manchester and at the beginning of December she arrived to take up her position. In order to take in more boys an idea was put forward to open a school in the schoolroom adjoining the Waterloo Road Chapel.⁸⁵ This it was thought would mean that the yard and working area would be free for a larger number of boys and sleeping accommodation could be looked for in adjoining premises. However the trustees of the Church for various reasons would not agree to this proposal and so the idea was quashed.⁸⁶ When the first teacher offered her resignation in December 1870 in order to take up another position, Stephenson recommended a male teacher he knew from Bolton. In May 1871 he applied to the Wesleyan Education Department for a grant towards the 'outfit of the Educational Department of the Home'.⁸⁷ A grant of £40 was awarded in July.⁸⁸

⁸³ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D541.H2/1/1).

⁸⁴ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.17.

⁸⁵ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), pp.35-36.

⁸⁶ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.38.

⁸⁷ Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/2), p.10.

⁸⁸ Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.12.

Reflecting the growing interest as well as the growing nature of the work it was decided in February 1871 to enlarge the committee of the Home by sixteen men. It was however thought that so large a committee was rather unwieldy for the day-to-day running of the Home and so a smaller 'House Committee' was appointed. This latter committee were to meet weekly and had the power to accept children and also appoint staff whenever necessary. The full committee was to meet monthly to approve these decisions and to discuss any larger concerns.⁸⁹ In July 1871 it was decided to approach the Wesleyan Methodist Conference with the following proposal: 'The committee had adopted a resolution recommending Conference to recognise the establishment of the Home'.⁹⁰ This meant that instead of being just a local project it would come under the auspices of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. A year later in July 1872 another request was sent to the Methodist Conference requesting an assistant for Stephenson to help him with his circuit duties.⁹¹ By March the following year the work associated with the Home had grown to such proportions that a decision was made to approach the Conference asking that Stephenson should be relieved of his duties as a circuit minister of the Church and be 'set apart' for the work of the Home.⁹² The Wesleyan Methodist Conference debated this issue and in 1873 Stephenson was appointed Principal. From January 1874 the minutes of the committee begin to refer to 'The Principal' instead of 'Mr Stephenson'.⁹³

After The Children's Home was officially taken under the wing of the Methodist Church a report on the work would given to the Conference each year. In the summer

⁸⁹ Minutes of Committee, book 1 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.124 and Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/2), pp.1-3.

⁹⁰ Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/2), p.13.

⁹¹ Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/2), p.27.

⁹² Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/2), pp.37-38.

⁹³ Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/2), p.64.

of 1872 Stephenson gave this report. There were, he said, seventy-four children in the London Branch and twenty at the Edgworth Branch. He stated that the 'moral character' of the children was very satisfactory, most of them accepting the discipline. Some of them who had been 'notoriously vicious' were much improved. He said that the object which was always before them was to 'lead the children to Christ' but that the children were treated cautiously and 'strong expressions of religious feeling' were not drawn out of them. However they were very thankful for the results that had been seen.⁹⁴ This latter aspect of the work would be considered to be very important by the members of the Conference. Showing his own viewpoint on this subject Stephenson wrote in the Annual report of 1873:

From all these matters of business, important as they are, I turn with relief to speak of our work in its more religious aspects: for it is emphatically a religious work. Our great anxiety is to secure the love of the children for Jesus; and apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit on their hearts, we have no strong confidence that their adult life will be happy and reputable. Let it be understood that our work is not merely, nor mainly, to feed, and clothe, and educate so many children, but to lead them to the Saviour. Our work is a Christian mission to the most needy and neglected children of the land.⁹⁵

Stephenson believed that it was of paramount importance to give the children Christian teaching. This he said was the only way to make a permanent difference in their lives. In his first annual report given in 1870, he said 'our constant endeavour is to saturate that life with a happy and healthy religious influence'⁹⁶ However he also said, 'we do not seek to accomplish our end by repressing child-nature, or by endless

⁹⁴ *The Children's Advocate*, September 1872 (LUSCA D541.D2/1/2), pp.6-7.

⁹⁵ Annual Report 1873, 4th paper 'Concerning these little ones' (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.10.

⁹⁶ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.3.

and wearisome religious services.’⁹⁷ Of him Jacka wrote, ‘Stephenson was an evangelical Methodist minister, and he never forgot it. But it did not sour his temper and certainly did not repel children.’⁹⁸ It would seem that Stephenson followed much the same line his own parents had taken in surrounding the children with a good example and the opportunity to learn about the love of God. In this way it was hoped they would be led to conversion and a true Christian faith of their own. He wanted them to express genuine feeling and to believe in God without any pressure being put on them. Their belief had to be real for them, not just gratitude for being cared for and they were certainly not to be forced into it. Nevertheless attendance at prayers and services would be expected of all the children and staff.

The children were taught to pray and family prayers were held each day. They also attended Church services each week.⁹⁹ After the opening of Bonner Road with its much greater scope the following instructions with regard to the religious life within the families were given to the men and women caring for the children. A hymn was to be sung and a brief word of prayer upon rising and before the first work of the day. Each morning there would be prayers in the chapel, everyone must attend bringing with them their Bible and hymn-book. Each family must walk from their houses to the chapel in an orderly manner, in order that the service would be ‘reverent and impressive’. This would not be so if everyone came ‘straggling in, in groups of two or three’. Sundays, the officers were told, were to be days of ‘rest and worship’. Everyone would attend Chapel twice and during the afternoon within their own families the children should have a Bible lesson. There were to be ‘illustrated books’

⁹⁷ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.3.

⁹⁸ Jacka, p.13.

⁹⁹ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), p.3.

for the children to look at and they were to be kept for Sunday use only. The officers were to 'make the day the most attractive of all the seven.'¹⁰⁰

The religious teaching given to the children, and the Christian atmosphere in which they were now living did have results. Each annual report from the various branches contained some details of the religious life of that part of the Home. Obviously the information is subjective, coming from only one source. However some of the comments written on individual children's records would appear to bear out the statements made. One example of a report will suffice; this from the London Branch for the year 1884–1885:

Moral and religious tone: I am glad to be able to report as favourably in this respect as in previous years. A large number of the children are not only nominal members of our classes,¹⁰¹ but are intelligently and continuously giving proof of a measure of spiritual life, that cannot be mistaken. We have the fullest confidence in the results of the means employed, to direct the minds of the children to the truths which are of vital importance to them, in forming their character and deciding them to give themselves to God's service, and realise salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ ...¹⁰²

Stephenson was very musical and when writing his biography Bradfield related this story. In order to help unhappy orphans to settle in to their new lives Stephenson would take them into the Chapel and let them sit with him at the organ whilst he played.

¹⁰⁰ *The Children's Advocate* July 1871 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/1), pp.4-5.

¹⁰¹ 'classes' refers to the Methodist Class Meeting, and indicates some measure of integration into main church life.

¹⁰² Annual Report 1884–1885 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/3), p.9.

it was [then] his custom, after the music, to tell the child its first Bible story, and many a time he has seen the tears flow as the child has for the first time in life heard the wonderful news of the love of Jesus.¹⁰³

Stephenson was a man of his time in that the characteristics of evangelicalism were very much a part of his ethos. He prayed for the children in his care, working tirelessly in this field of evangelism. He told them Bible stories, ensured they each had their own Bible and had them taught to read it. He prayed that they would come to know Jesus as their friend and Saviour. He was however aware that many of these children had never known a friend or even a kind adult and that these ideas would be new to them and therefore caution must be used.

The provision made for the upbringing of the girls and boys reflected the different spheres they would be expected to occupy as they grew up. In the early days, because of a lack of facilities and room, the only useful work the boys could do was chopping and selling firewood. However it was always the intention to prepare them for later life by teaching them a trade, and so eventually at Bonner Road a carpenter's shop, an engine room, a printing shop, a book binding shop and a shoemaker's was set up. Curnock described each of these and some of the boys who benefited from this training. However, of the girls and the work they were trained for there is just one sentence:

Well, there is not much to be said about washing and ironing, except that it is all useful knowledge for girls who have to earn their bread, and who some

¹⁰³ Bradfield, p.159.

day, I hope, will have homes and wash-tubs and ironing boards of their own.¹⁰⁴

Although this sounds condescending to twenty-first century ears, it reflects the culture of the day when very few opportunities were available for women. It was expected that they would marry and care for their own families; or in the case of many of these children, that they would become maids in someone else's house. By 1875 dressmaking had been added to the training available; this would be a very useful accomplishment for many girls.

Stephenson did not believe that just anyone was suitable for the work of child-care. Training, he firmly believed, was necessary and his vision was for a training school for Christian workers. Speaking of the women who would be employed to care for the children he said:

it is a huge mistake to suppose that anybody, who may have proved incompetent in any other walk of life, but who can wash a child's face or sew a button upon a child's dress, is fit for such work as ours.¹⁰⁵

Over a period of six months in 1873 he wrote a series of articles on 'Woman's Work for Christ' in which he advocated the professional training of women.¹⁰⁶ The articles published in *The Children's Advocate*, coincided with the opening of the staff-training department at Bonner Road. At this time also it was reported that 'several Christian women having been trained by practical experience of the work, are now usefully employed as officers in the Home'.¹⁰⁷ The training became more structured as time went on with the women receiving lessons as well as practical experience. In 1878-79

¹⁰⁴ Curnock, p.24.

¹⁰⁵ Annual Report 1875-76 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.25.

¹⁰⁶ *The Children's Advocate* July 1873 – December 1873 [The article was serialised over 6 months] (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/3).

¹⁰⁷ Annual Report 1875-76 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.25.

the first probationer Sisters, many of whom were 'old girls' of the home, were employed, they were to be called 'Sisters of the Children.'¹⁰⁸ Of the men no mention is made as far as training is concerned. It would appear that their role was that of administration and of instructing the boys in the different trades. Lectures however were given to both the men and women and some detailed are, 'The Science of Education', and the 'Study of the Holy Scripture'. It was also reported that a class had been organised 'for the study of the Elements of Christian Theology'.¹⁰⁹ As far as giving the men training in child-care this did not happen for a long time; the first male students to be accepted at the Staff Training College were in the 1960s.

Stephenson believed that the sphere of men and women was different, but he did not indicate that one was superior to the other. He made his views on this clear when he said 'for Christian work, out of the pulpit, and out of the Church court, woman is at least the rival of man.'¹¹⁰ There is however no evidence of women being members of the committee or being involved in major decisions. By implication there was one recorded exception to this. Horner described the tea party at the home of Mr and Mrs Mager when Stephenson first put forward his idea:

I can still see the room in which we sat, while Mrs Mager prepared the tea and Dr Stephenson ... delivered his first speech about the Children's Home ... Dr Stephenson spoke to *three* [my emphasis] eager listeners that evening.¹¹¹

Mrs Mager was to become a full time dedicated worker in the Home. However although at this point she would appear to be an 'eager listener', she was never a member of the decision making committee. The Committee started with a

¹⁰⁸ 'Sisters of the Children' A brief History of the Sisterhood (NCH 1985) (LUSCA, D541/E6/3).

¹⁰⁹ Annual Report 1876 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.5.

¹¹⁰ *The Children's Advocate* June 1873 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/3), p.82.

¹¹¹ Horner, pp.11-13.

membership of three and soon grew, but all the names that were added were men.

The 1st February 1871 minutes read 'The list of names of the Gentlemen it was proposed to add to the committee was read over'.¹¹² Nevertheless although there were no women on the committee, in the care of the children they were essential.

The Home continued to grow. It was a natural growth which happened as the need was seen, and the money and premises became available. After the move to Bonner Road the opportunity came for a branch to be opened in the countryside away from the 'pollution' of the city. It was felt this would be good both physically and morally for the children. Set high up on the wild Lancashire moors was a derelict public house, the Wheatsheaf Inn, which was a notorious place well known in the area as the haunt of shady characters. James Barlow, a mill-owner and a Methodist, believed that alcoholic liquor was an evil that blighted people's lives. He was very concerned about the inn's influence on the people in the village and surrounding area, and so as soon as an opportunity arose he bought it and closed it down. Barlow had known Stephenson when he was minister in Bolton and he was very interested to hear about the work that had begun in London with destitute children. He offered the Wheatsheaf Inn and about 200 acres of land to Stephenson to set up a home for children there. He was also instrumental in raising much of the money that was needed to begin the project.¹¹³ This, the committee believed, was an opportunity to take some of the children away from their background and from the temptations of the city.

¹¹² Minutes of Committee, book 1(LUSCA, D541.A1/1), p.116.

¹¹³ Minutes of Committee, book 2 (LUSCA, D541.A1/2), p.29.

It must have been a hard life for boys and girls who had spent all their lives in crowded city streets. There were no other houses around, very few people and the tiny village of Edgworth was over a mile away across open countryside. Many of the children missed the crowded streets of London, finding the barren moor-land an unfriendly place. After the hustle and bustle of city life the silence of the countryside would be strange, frightening and very lonely. It was also a very bleak place in the winter. Mager left his job with the London and Westminster Bank, and with his wife took the first party of boys to Edgworth in January 1872. This was a far from easy task. The work was hard and totally new to all of them, even to Mager and his wife. Firstly they had to make the Wheatsheaf building habitable, whilst living in it at the same time. The boys had to help with quarrying stones and building the houses the children would live in. The marshy moor-land had to be reclaimed and turned into profitable farm-land. These were all daunting tasks. Many of the boys were rebellious at first, but slowly the branch came into being and the children began to settle down. This was not to be a separate project but a branch of the London Children's Home.

The early records written by Mager have been lost, although reference is made to booklets that he had written in some earlier texts. It is therefore not possible to read of the difficulties and joys of setting up the home through his eyes. However Horner gave some details from his memory. He wrote that, the house was 'infested with rats'; the roads were in very poor condition; the fields were marshy; and in 'wet weather the house was surrounded by water and mud.' The land was covered with boulders, and under the marshy surface for several feet was a 'widespread mass of

fibrous, living, sponge-like roots.’¹¹⁴ This had to be cleared and drainage systems set up before the land could be converted into fertile soil. All the work had to be done by hand with spades; there was no modern equipment. The Annual report for 1873 gave details of the work undertaken during the first year. The original house had been altered and improved, a house for a second family of boys had been built, and schoolrooms big enough for 150 children provided. A house for the Governor had been built, also a swimming bath and playgrounds. Some stock had been procured for the farm and work on improving the land begun. The next plan was to build a house for girls and a large laundry in which to do the washing for the branch. It was significant that these two projects were put together. It would seem that everyone concerned must have had to work very hard to achieve these results.¹¹⁵ Two years later the 1875 report from the Lancashire Branch contained these details: The building work is continuing successfully, farm land improving, the ‘soothing and steadying influence of healthy employment upon our children is most marked.’¹¹⁶

In June 1891, almost thirty years later, Mager gave an address to a group of visitors to Edgworth, which was subsequently printed in *The Journal of the Manchester Geographical Society*. He told of the education and training that was being given to the children and he described in detail the facilities that they had available. When talking about the ‘Model Dairy’ on the farm, he referred back to the early days and said there were:

100 acres of reclaimed moor land; [and that] by boys’ labour – delving, draining, liming – this sterile soil has been made into verdant meadows and productive gardens. ... Character has been reclaimed as well as fields. Men –

¹¹⁴ Horner, pp.186 &188.

¹¹⁵ Annual Report 1873 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.7.

¹¹⁶ Annual Report 1875 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.5.

honest industrious, and resourceful – besides meadows, have been made by the same course of beneficent toil.¹¹⁷

It is evident from the article that the benefit of living in the countryside as opposed to the city was an inherent belief.

Although the early records have been lost, Mager's notebook beginning in 1877 in the form of a brief diary of events has survived. Much that is written is very prosaic, often about the weather. For example; 'Severe storm all day Snow and strong N.E. wind' was recorded on 3rd January. Animals were bought and sold: 'Sold cow "Lilly" £20.15s', this was on 25th January. He recorded whether the children were taken to the Church in the village on Sunday or whether they had a service in the schoolroom. Sometimes the weather was too inclement for the long walk, to the village Chapel. He also recorded the punishments he had to administer and the reasons for them:

Obliged at last, by A's continued insubordination and impertinence to Officers to give him a thrashing. For many months he has been a source of trouble to the officers of Wh. Ho. [Wheatsheaf House] by wilfully breaking rules and resisting authority. I have made many personal appeals to the lad to amend his conduct. May the discipline to which I have subjected him tonight prove more effectual.¹¹⁸

Another boy was caned and then 'put into sackcloth' so that he would 'feel the disgrace of his bad behaviour'. He had been caught stealing money.¹¹⁹ Sometimes boys and girls ran away because they were not used to the remoteness of the

¹¹⁷ 'Children's Home on the Moors at Edgworth' address given by Alfred Mager, photocopied extract from 'Manchester Geographical Society Proceedings' (LUSCA, D541.J27/5/3), p.141.

¹¹⁸ Children's Home, Edgworth, Mager's Notebook (LUSCA, D541.J27/3/1).

¹¹⁹ Mager's Notebook (LUSCA, D541.J27/3/1).

countryside. In March 1877 Mager wrote, 'the spring epidemic of running away was at its height on Tuesday last (13th) when two more boys proposed absconding.'¹²⁰

Mager not only oversaw the running of the home, dealing with runaways and disciplining troublemakers, he also had a busy preaching schedule in and around the area. He dealt with all the administration for the branch, seeing to any legal requirements with regard to the land, fencing and boundaries and also the condition of the roads. When the scheme for emigrating some of the children to Canada began, he accompanied a number of parties and saw them settled. He travelled to London many times for meetings and Stephenson and Horner visited Edgworth for the same purpose, so enabling the work to continue under one umbrella and with one purpose.

Stephenson was a true pioneer and as he got one scheme off the ground he saw the need for another. What work was available for so many children when they were old enough to fend for themselves? How could they find honest work? Fending for themselves was exactly what most of them had been doing since they were very small. However without the resources to live honestly and without good parental or other adult guidance, they had existed by any means available to them. Stephenson was aware that without after care, and without a job and somewhere to live, the chance of a permanent change in their lives was very small. In 1872 the Committee discussed the idea of taking some of the children to Canada and settling them there. Stephenson agreed to go to Canada to investigate the viability of the scheme. It was important to know that there really was the availability of work, and that the people of Canada were willing to accept the children. They also wished to make sure that the

¹²⁰ Mager's Notebook, 17th March 1877 (LUSCA, D541.J27/3/1).

children could be placed with Christian families and that they could be properly supervised. The answers to these questions must have been satisfactory because in October it was reported that a site had been bought about a mile from Hamilton, Ontario. This was to be a base for the children. It was proposed that they would live there initially until placed in employment or adopted by a family. The Branch would also be there as a home to which the children could feel they belonged and where they could go if they were in trouble of any kind.

Stephenson returned to England and gave his report to the committee. He said that his impression was that the people of Canada were willing to accept and employ as many trained children as they wished to send. He also felt that the 'social and religious climate' in Canada would give the children a good start and the prospect of useful employment. Lastly he made this statement, 'when children have sprung from the pauper or semi-criminal class, emigration affords certainly the best, perhaps the only chance of their rising above the level of their birth.'¹²¹ It was decided that no child would be emigrated until they had been trained and their character assessed in order that the staff 'could speak about them with a reasonable amount of confidence.' Therefore it was proposed that the Canadian Branch would not be used for training purposes. Stephenson went on to say, 'we do not, at present, perceive that emigration is that panacea for social evils, which has been sometimes described.' The policy therefore would be to find suitable employment in England for as many children as possible. The children who would be emigrated were those for whom it was felt this major change would be more beneficial. In some cases the reason was to remove them from their dubious acquaintances and the temptations of their previous life.

¹²¹ Annual Report 1873 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.8.

Stephenson said that he believed that this might be their only chance of 'rising above the line of hopeless pauperism which is so nearly allied to crime.'¹²²

In 1873 it was proposed that fifty children should be sent during the month of May. Horner, along with three helpers, had agreed to take them. A few days before the first party of children left for Canada they were allowed to invite two or three of their relatives to a farewell meal. Any relatives who came were given details of the journey, when they would arrive and what kind of occupation the children would be settled in. They were also given envelopes with the address of the Branch in Canada. The fact that this information was freely available would, it was thought, help to minimise some of the sorrow that would be felt. Writing in an article for *The Children's Advocate* Stephenson said:

they may be very poor, and some of them, maybe, not very reputable; but they have natural affection and the rights of kinship, and it can only leave a rankling sense of wrong and injustice when such communications are not allowed.¹²³

It would appear that although the children were going to start a new life in another country they were to be encouraged to keep contact with their relatives in England. It is not possible to ascertain whether this was carried out, but the intention was there.

On his return to England Horner gave his report at the September committee meeting. There had been thirty-four boys and fifteen girls in the party. They had all been either adopted or found employment with Christian people, mostly from the Wesleyan

¹²² Annual Report 1873 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.9.

¹²³ *The Children's Advocate* January 1875 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/5), p.3.

Methodist congregation. Before the children arrived 200 applications had been received from people willing to have them.

Of the boys:

- 26 were settled with farmers
- 2 were to learn carpentry
- 2 were to learn the blacksmiths and wheelwrights trades
- 2 were to work in a warehouse in Hamilton
- 2 were to work in the Methodist Book Room, Toronto.

Of the girls:

- 5 were adopted
- 6 were employed as domestic servants
- 4 were settled with farmers

The boys were to earn \$3½ to \$6 per month and the girls \$3 per month, all with board and lodging included. A bank account had been opened in Hamilton and arrangements made that any money the children were able to save would be banked for them. A member of staff was employed in order to visit the children wherever they were placed, to ensure that their living conditions were good and that they were being treated fairly. Horner stated that they had also reserved the right to remove any child from a placement where it was thought they were being unfairly or badly treated.¹²⁴ The children were to be corresponded with regularly and if the placement broke down they were to be cared for at the Hamilton branch. The Department of

¹²⁴ *The Children's Advocate* September 1873 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/3), p.141.

Immigration gave to the staff of the Home a free pass for the Canadian railways for a year to enable the children to be visited.¹²⁵

It was not to be expected, however, that for the children it would be a smooth transition from one country to another; from the crowded streets of London to the wide-open spaces of Canada. Everything, not least the climate in winter, would be so completely different. They would be living with strangers who, no matter how kind, were not the family or friends they had left behind. The Canadian accent would seem strange, and the way of life often a total contrast to what the boys and girls had been used to. A letter sent to Stephenson dated 14th July 1873 gave many little hints of homesickness. The boy must have been amongst the first party to go with Horner and he was answering a letter he had received from Stephenson just three days before. He wrote that he was continuing in his Christian life and attending Sunday school and prayer meetings. He said he was going to work hard and save in order to bring his mother out to be with him. Although throughout the letter he seemed determined to be positive about the good things he was doing, the sadness seeped through:

I do feel lonely very often', 'I begin to feel a mother's love more than ever', 'the words Mother and Home are so charming', 'the English tunes [in Church] puts me in mind of home', and 'give my best love to all my friends, and to my little brother Gilly.'¹²⁶

The fact that Stephenson had written so soon after the boy had arrived in Canada demonstrates his caring spirit and if he wrote to one of the forty-nine children it would seem probable that he wrote to them all.

¹²⁵ *The Children's Advocate* September 1873 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/3), p.141.

¹²⁶ *The Children's Advocate* September 1873 (LUSCA, D541.D2/1/3), p.142.

Many of the children did put down roots, and as they grew older and became independent, earned enough money to pay for other members of their family to join them. Some settled well as children but came back to England when they were older. Others came back to England because they did not settle; they found the work hard and were obviously unhappy. Of one boy, who went in June 1873, it is written that he was lazy. His comment to this was that he did not believe in “killing himself for \$3 a month”. He left his first situation and another was found for him, but from this he ran away. He was found and returned to his place of employment. However he was still not satisfied and in August 1875 he was given permission to return to England.¹²⁷ On the other side of the coin another boy who also went with the first party settled well, all his reports give him an excellent character and he was said to be ‘an industrious, prudent, steady, young man’. In June 1897 it was reported that he had four children, ‘is a Class leader, Precentor and librarian in Sunday school and a Local Preacher’.¹²⁸ This would be the kind of success story that Stephenson and his colleagues were hoping and praying for.

Of the girls who went with the first party most of them settled well and it was said that their character was good. However one girl, who was dismissed from a number of positions because she was untruthful and dishonest, was eventually sent back to England in disgrace because ‘she was injuring the name of the Home’.¹²⁹ On a typewritten sheet, which is a report on the first party to go to Canada but written some years later, someone had hand-written ‘A failure’.¹³⁰ Sadly there is also a line drawn across the bottom of the page of her record: she died in England in September 1875.

¹²⁷ Canadian Registers 1 (LUSCA, D541.L1/2/1).

¹²⁸ Canadian Registers 1 (LUSCA, D541.L1/2/1).

¹²⁹ Canadian Registers 1 (LUSCA, D541.L1/2/1).

¹³⁰ Typewritten sheet (undated) inserted in Canadian Party Register vol.1 (LUSCA, D541.L1/2/21).

Another girl had this comment written against her record ‘the cleverest and most erratic of the girls. Lived in Toronto several years working as tailoress – finally went to China as a missionary and I expect died there – she would have been 74 if living now.’¹³¹ Records of each child taken to Canada were kept, and reports on their progress, change of employment, health and character noted. As they grew up and left the care of the Home their progress was still followed when at all possible. In some cases there is a note to say when they married, how many children they had and where they were living. For example on one boy who went to Canada in 1873, the report of 1886 reads that he was ‘seen by Dr Stephenson in Toronto where he is comfortably settled. Has a wife and child.’¹³²

The annual report from the Branch at Hamilton in 1876 mentioned Andrew Doyle, the Local Government Inspector who had been sent to investigate the care of pauper children emigrated to Canada. This report will be dealt with in more detail in the chapters relating to Annie Macpherson, and Maria Rye. However mention needs to be made at this point because it is stated that Doyle did not visit the branch at Hamilton nor any of the children who were in the care of The Children’s Home. The staff in Hamilton reported that they were satisfied that the recommendations made in Doyle’s report were already being carried out. However they did feel that Doyle had been somewhat unfair to Macpherson and Rye saying that it was not a true representation of ‘the work of those two excellent ladies.’ The report went on to say that all the children who had been placed out had been visited even though they were

¹³¹ Typewritten sheet (undated) inserted in Canadian Party Register vol.1 (LUSCA, D541.L1/2/21).

¹³² Canadian Party Register vol.1 (LUSCA, D541.L1/2/21).

spread over a wide area. At this time there were just over 200 working in Canada and twenty living at the Branch in Hamilton.¹³³

In May 1876 the Quarterly News gave some snippets of information about the way some of the children had settled. A sample of eleven children was as follows:

- 4 were still in the same place
- 3 had moved but were still giving satisfaction
- 1 owned his own land
- 1 had been returned for misconduct – ‘this is not a promising case: very sly and deceitful’ was written.
- 2 were with guardians and treated like their own children.

There were also extracts from letters published which demonstrated a child’s need to maintain contact with his/her roots. One child said he/she was disappointed not to have had a letter from Stephenson, and although he/she liked their situation they sounded homesick. Another child wrote about all the good things on the farm and the plentiful food available; she said she had received a photograph from her sister who was also in Canada.¹³⁴ These two extracts show the importance of a link with their past lives. Photographs especially seem to have been treasured. It would seem from this however that as in so many cases, care was not taken to keep siblings together.

The Quarterly Budget of News published in 1878 contained a report by Stephenson on the work in Canada. He had just returned to England after visiting as many of the

¹³³ Annual Report 1876 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), pp.9-10.

¹³⁴ Annual Report 1870-1879, ‘The Quarterly Budget of News from The Children’s Home’ May 1876 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), pp.14-15.

children as he was able to. This is his summary of those children who had been two and a half years in Canada.

Of the 47 girls three were dead, which left 44:

- 12 were excellent
- 23 were good
- 5 were moderate
- 2 were bad
- none were criminal

Of the 133 boys:

- 22 were excellent
- 73 were good
- 37 were moderate
- 1 was bad
- none were criminal.¹³⁵

Bradfield quoted Stephenson's comment 'Surely ... this is a matter for devout thankfulness to Almighty God. That less than three per cent should have turned out badly is indeed astonishing. To God be the glory!'¹³⁶ However from these figures it would appear that, of the forty-four girls still living, two girls were missing in the system or someone put down the wrong figures.

As the years went by the Branch in Hamilton became well established and the care of the children, according to the reports, continued as conscientiously as ever. In the Annual report for 1884–1885 Stephenson wrote that they were still having success

¹³⁵ Annual Report 1870-1879, 'The Quarterly Budget of News from the Children's Home' February 1878 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1), p.6.

¹³⁶ Bradfield, p.217.

with the emigration work and that although some young people had gone to other colonies, Canada was where their main work continued. He said that only in Canada were they able to 'maintain the system of supervision which is desirable in all cases and absolutely necessary in nearly all.'¹³⁷ The report from the Branch in Hamilton for that year stated that of the twenty-two girls who had come in the last party twenty had settled well, one had lost two positions because of a 'pettish and fickle temper' and the other was probably going to be returned to the branch because she was 'hard to manage'. However, after being visited at her placement, it was decided that the best way to help her was to put her with someone more experienced in the care of children. Of the fifty-one boys, forty settled well from the start, eight were returned to the branch for 'some boyish waywardness' and three had run away. The last three were found and with the eight who were returned they were looked after at the branch until it was considered that they were ready to go to another placement. It was reported that this process took days with some but weeks with others. Of the three who originally ran away two were doing 'remarkably well' and the other was 'much improved'.¹³⁸ The majority of information on this and other aspects of child saving, as stated earlier, is to be found in records kept by the staff and written reports. Although it is in many respects quite detailed it does only give one side and is bound by its very purpose to show a positive perspective.

It was a big undertaking to care for and keep track of children settled over a wide area of Canada. According to the records they were carefully placed, monitored, visited each year by a member of staff from the Home, and all letters were answered. The 1888–1889 report stated that:

¹³⁷ Annual Report 1884–1885 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/3), p.27.

¹³⁸ Annual Report 1884–1885 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/3), p.28.

the visitation of the children has gone on steadily during the year. As they are scattered all over the province of Ontario, this has necessitated a great deal of travelling ... Several hundred letters from employers and children have been answered during the year.

Many of the children visited the Branch either to deposit some of their money for safe keeping, to ask for advice about their future plans, or in some cases 'just to spend their holiday *at home*'.¹³⁹ There were always many more children being cared for in England than were being taken to Canada. The opportunity was only given to those who it was believed would gain the greatest advantage from the new life. Of course it goes without saying that not everyone who went was able to settle, as can be seen from the records, but it also appears that what was decided was always in the interests of the child. What is not recorded is how much say each child had in their future.

Towards the end of the century there was disquiet over the immigration schemes by some of the Canadian population. There were various reasons for this, one being that there was an industrial depression and it was thought the young immigrants would take the jobs of the Canadian men. In 1893 the treasurer of the Hamilton Branch said that all children who were sent to Canada should have two or three years' training in England before being sent out and that they should all be 'morally and physically healthy'. This was for the upkeep of the good name of the Home as well as the good of the children concerned. There had been, he said, 'too much indiscriminate shipping of ill-trained children'. However he was quick to point out that he did not feel this applied to the work they were involved in. There had been very few cases where a child from the Home had been reported in the papers for wrong doing. This

¹³⁹ Annual Reports 1884–1889 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/3), p.44.

he believed was because the children were ‘well selected and well trained’ and that they ‘exercise close over-sight, and promptly take charge of those who are going wrong.’¹⁴⁰ It must however be noted that all of the organisations involved in the various schemes believed they were fulfilling their obligation of care for the children. Stephenson reported in 1894 that the work in Canada was becoming more difficult, but he felt they had suffered less than some other societies because the number of children sent each year was comparatively small. He particularly made comment of the ‘large contingents’ of children recently sent out by Barnardo’s. Also by this time there were very many more societies sending children than when The Children’s Home first began their scheme.¹⁴¹

The scope of work covered by The Children’s Home grew and as a need was seen another branch came into being. An Industrial school for those already before the courts was opened at Milton, Gravesend in 1878. The first branch outside England was opened at Ramsey on the Isle of Man in 1880; this was followed by Princess Alice at Sutton Coldfield in 1882. On 31st March 1885, sixteen years after the founding, there were 697 children in the care of The Children’s Home:

- 252 in London
- 168 at Edgworth
- 167 at Milton
- 41 at Ramsey
- 49 at Birmingham
- 20 in the Canadian Branch. There are no figures however for the children who were living and working in Canada.

¹⁴⁰ Annual Report 1892–1893 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/5), p.41.

¹⁴¹ Annual Report 1893–1894 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/5), p.37.

During the previous year 228 children were admitted and 215 had left.¹⁴² The years passed and more branches were opened caring for children with physical handicaps¹⁴³ or learning difficulties,¹⁴⁴ as well as children without parental care. In 1969, a hundred years after the beginning, there were forty-five branches in existence.

As the children grew older many kept in contact with the Home and any special occasion was marked with a visit 'Home' bringing their families and friends with them. In February 1931 it was noted that a boy who went to Canada in June 1873 from the Edgworth Branch had died and had left '\$1,000.00' in his will to the Home.¹⁴⁵ The Christian influence remained with many of them, made more special by the people who had taught them. A letter from one boy who had gone to Canada finished with this note 'I would walk a good way to hear Mr Stephenson preach.'¹⁴⁶ It can also be summed up in the words of one of the first boys taken in. He died only a year after admittance from lack of care in his early life, and as he was dying he was asked if he were afraid. He replied, 'No ... I'm not afraid to die since I've been told Jesus died ... wasn't it good of him to die for a poor chap like me?'¹⁴⁷ His record in the Admissions book reads like this 'His last testimony was sure and steadfast, he loved the Saviour and knew heaven to be his home'.¹⁴⁸ This kind of language can be found in many of the records left by the different child savers; it was quite a normal mode of speech among evangelical Christians of the time. It was also an expression of the result they were all working for.

¹⁴² Annual Reports 1884–1889 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/3), p.6.

¹⁴³ Opened in Chipping Norton 1903.

¹⁴⁴ Edgworth became a school for children with learning difficulties 1953.

¹⁴⁵ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D541.H2/1/1).

¹⁴⁶ Annual Report 1877 (LUSCA, D541.D1/1/1).

¹⁴⁷ Bradfield, p.108.

¹⁴⁸ Admissions Book 1 (LUSCA, D541.H2/1/1).

When Stephenson had the vision of a home for destitute children, he was a minister of the Methodist church with all the daily work that entailed. The work with the children was an extension of his pastoral care for the people in the area where he was living. It was not until 1873, four years after the beginning that the Wesleyan Methodist Conference officially took the Home under its umbrella and appointed Stephenson as the first Principal. This meant that he would no longer have the ordinary duties of a circuit minister but could devote himself full-time to the building up and expansion of the Home. He was a tireless worker for the causes he believed in. He not only founded The Children's Home; he saw his dream of a Deaconess Order for the Methodist Church, with a formal training scheme come into being. He wrote hymns and music, and formed a choir and band with the children. He also played a full part within the Wesleyan Methodist Church, especially at the yearly Conference, being its President in 1891. Much can be read about his work, The Children's Home and the children, but very little about the private man. Stories such as playing leapfrog with the boys; staying up all night to prepare a surprise Christmas; and children clinging to his coat tails whilst telling him their news, suggest that he was a fun-loving approachable man but we lack certain detail in this area. It is clear, however, that he was the driving force behind the entire project for The Children's Home.

The Children's Home was started at a time when there were thousands of destitute children living on the streets, not only of London but of many other cities as well. Stephenson saw the need, and his evangelical Christian principles would not let him ignore it. His concern was as much for the moral welfare as for the physical well being of the children. He realised early on that unless the destitute ragamuffins were given a chance to experience a home life free from fear and want, they were locked

into a vicious circle which would eventually lead to criminality. When the first girls were taken into the Home, Stephenson put this appeal in *The Children's Advocate*:

There is a more crying necessity for a girls' refuge than even for a boys'.

Thousands of female children, for lack of help, are drifting fast towards the brothel and the gaol. In God's name, let's be quick to save them.¹⁴⁹

The 'city arabs' who had never been taught the difference between right and wrong needed a good example to follow. They also needed to learn a trade in order to break the chain of destitution and become upright hard working citizens. For Stephenson this could only be achieved by caring for their bodies and at the same time teaching them to love God and to live by the Christian principles by which he and his co-workers lived.

¹⁴⁹ *The Children's Advocate* June 1871 (LUSCA, D541.A1/1/1), p.4 .

Chapter 8

A Catholic home for every destitute Catholic Child

The administrative unit of the Catholic Church is the diocese, of which there are twenty-two in England and Wales. Historically Catholic welfare agencies were established in these dioceses to serve the needs of Catholic families and children. There has never been a nationwide umbrella organisation for this purpose. These welfare agencies were and are independent of the church. There are two dioceses which border each other in London; Westminster which comprises the Greater London Boroughs, north of the Thames and west of Waltham Forest, Newham, plus the districts of Staines and Sunbury-on-Thames, and the county of Hertfordshire; and Southwark comprising of London Boroughs (south of the Thames) and the county of Kent.

The diocese with which I am primarily concerned in this study is that of Westminster. From the middle of the nineteenth century a number of Catholic homes or orphanages were opened in London. Each one filled a need in the area in which it was opened, and came into being through the work of a particular priest or convent. At the end of the nineteenth century the homes in the Westminster diocese were brought together under the umbrella of The Crusade of Rescue, which in 1985 was re-named The Catholic Children's Society (Westminster). Each diocese has a different name for their individual child-care society.

I.R. Hoskins states that in the eighteenth century two child-care societies were founded in London, one in Lincoln's Inn and one in Wapping. The work was hidden and secret because the 'small persecuted Catholic community' had no legal rights before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1828.¹⁵⁰ There are no records available in the archives relating to either of these homes.

The records, for the different homes which opened during the second half of the century are rather sparse. The information which is available is to be found in large ledgers which give very few personal details of the children and staff. Neither do they tell anything about the day-to-day organisation of the institutions.¹⁵¹ Other information can be found in reports, some of which were written fifty years after the events recorded. As with all reports of this nature the information is very subjective, giving only one point of view. In order to provide an adequate comparison with the other homes and organisations in my research, it will be necessary to take sample details from a few of the different orphanages. This prosopographical study will give a clearer indication of the methods of care and reasons why these establishments were felt to be essential.

There are however some eye witness accounts in a book published in 1911, edited by Reverend N. Waugh. I am greatly indebted to this book for untangling some of the information found in unmarked ledgers. The major content of the book is by an anonymous author, but internal evidence shows that it was written only months before publication, in 1910. Waugh stated that the author was 'largely indebted for his

¹⁵⁰ I. R. Hoskins, *Catholic Child Care in England: A Survey of the Church's Work for Destitute and Deprived Children* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1956), p.6.

¹⁵¹ Whether any of this information has been preserved at different convents, where the nuns had charge of the orphanage, I have not been able to find out. I have not been allowed access to it if it does exist and I understand that most of this information has been destroyed.

materials to the Rev. E. Bans'.¹⁵² Information about the opening of the various homes is given, as are details of the persons responsible for them. There is little or nothing about individual children.

In the introduction Waugh put forward his theory to explain the poverty suffered by the large numbers of Irish Catholics then living in England. He believed that the problem began in the eighteenth century when a law was passed in England prohibiting the export of cloth from Ireland onto the world market. He stated that the reason for the law was that the Irish trade was damaging the trade of merchants in England. The economic problems this caused were then exacerbated by the failure of the potato crop in the nineteenth century. He believed these were the chief factors in the 'abnormal multiplication of our Catholic poor'.¹⁵³ The education of the children was one of Waugh's concerns, especially spiritual teaching in Catholic schools. This is also the main theme running through the book. As part of the history to The Crusade of Rescue he briefly mentioned three Catholic charities which were set up to care for destitute Catholic children. The first in 1764 was to provide education and was supported by 'English nobility and gentry'. The second in 1784 was for the purpose of 'apprenticing poor Catholic children'; and the third in 1796 was designed 'to maintain destitute orphans'. These three Societies were amalgamated in 1812 and became The Associated Catholic Charities'. There is no other information about this organisation or whether a home for destitute orphans was available.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² "These, My Little Ones": The Origin, Progress, and Development of the Incorporated Society of the Crusade of Rescue and Homes for Destitute Catholic Children ed. by Rev. N. Waugh (London: Sands, 1911), pp.1-2.

¹⁵³ Waugh, pp.1-2.

¹⁵⁴ Waugh, p.16.

In the nineteenth century the Catholic Church was re-emerging into public life for the first time since the Reformation. Catholics had for many years been barred from holding public office, from entering Parliament, from the professions and from the universities. After the Catholic Relief Act was passed in 1791 some religious tolerance was achieved but there were still restrictions with regard to holding public office. At this time there were only thirty-five Catholic Churches in England and Wales and about 300 priests.¹⁵⁵ In 1829 the Catholic Emancipation Act was passed and so many of the restrictions were lifted, not least the right of worshiping openly. Although it has often been thought that the Church was in decline, Gerald Parsons states it 'possessed strength, vitality and the resources for expansion *before* the advent of early Victorian conversions, large-scale Irish immigration, or the restoration of the hierarchy.' He quotes from Edward Norman who described existing Catholicism as 'discreet and carefully unobtrusive' but certainly not 'underground or hidden'.¹⁵⁶ In 1850 the Catholic Church was given permission to restore their hierarchy which heightened for a time anti-Catholic feeling. The fear that the first loyalty of a Catholic was to Rome instead of to Britain was an ever-present feeling.

Figures show that during the first half of the nineteenth century the number of Catholics in England and Wales had grown from under a 100,000 to 750,000.¹⁵⁷ This increase was due in the main to the large number of Irish who came to England to escape the potato famine in Ireland. Blight had destroyed the potato crop for two seasons causing immense hardship and starvation. Most of the Irish people were destitute and in poor health when they arrived in England. From this it is reasonable

¹⁵⁵ Waugh, pp.36-37.

¹⁵⁶ Gerald Parsons, 'Victorian Roman Catholicism: Emancipation, Expansion and Achievement' in *Religion in Victorian Britain: 1 Traditions* ed by Gerald Parsons (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.146-183 (p.155).

¹⁵⁷ Parsons, p.150.

to assume that many children would have become orphans increasing the number of destitute children living on the streets or taken into the workhouses, particularly in London and Liverpool. It is believed that in 1846 alone 287,000 Irish landed at Liverpool. They arrived with nothing, leaving behind, for the most part, a rural lifestyle and finding themselves existing in the cities' slums.¹⁵⁸ The author of *These my Little Ones* wrote 'Fagin and his brethren had two hundred schools in the slums for training vagrant and abandoned children to be thieves'.¹⁵⁹ Destitution and criminality again can be seen to be linked.

There were however other reasons for the increase in Catholicism at this time. A number of influential converts from the Church of England made their voices heard. Many of them became enthusiastic leaders and exponents of their new faith. There had also already been a growth in the number of Catholics apart from Irish immigrants especially in urban areas. Parsons claims that:

Irish immigration did not *initiate* either the general expansion of English Catholicism or the specific growth of urban Catholicism – but it did account for the massive *scale* of expansion and urban growth, and it did create, uniquely among the Victorian denominations, a large, even predominant, working-class constituency within English Catholicism.¹⁶⁰

Cardinal Henry Edward Manning (1808–1892) was a prominent figure in working for the provision of education and care for Catholic children. An Anglican clergyman who converted to the Roman Catholic faith in 1851, he became Catholic Archbishop of Westminster in 1865. One of his deepest concerns was that all Catholic children

¹⁵⁸ Waugh, p.46.

¹⁵⁹ Waugh, p.48.

¹⁶⁰ Parsons, p.163.

should be given a Catholic education. On taking office he wrote a Pastoral to be read out in all the churches of the Diocese in which he put forward his concerns and the way he believed the problem could be addressed. There were, he estimated, at least 7000 Catholic children in London who were not receiving even an elementary education.¹⁶¹ There were children who came before the courts who were subsequently sent to Protestant reformatories because of the lack of Catholic provision.¹⁶² There were also, he believed, more than a thousand Catholic children 'detained in the workhouses' where the 'education is exclusively Protestant'.¹⁶³ He appealed for prayers and for money in order to start a trust fund to provide the necessary schools. In 1866 he instituted the Westminster Diocesan Education Fund for poor children. This fund was to provide for the 'rescuing of Catholic pauper children from workhouses and elsewhere where little respect was being given to their inherited religious affiliation.'¹⁶⁴ To fulfil the need he said it would be necessary to build about thirty-five schools, two reformatories and two industrial schools to care for the children who had come before the courts.¹⁶⁵ The fear that children would not be instructed in the Catholic faith and that they would be lost to Catholicism was, he believed, a pressing concern. Manning appointed Father Thomas Seddon as secretary to the Westminster Diocesan Education Fund and for over thirty years he had 'oversight of the diocesan reformatories and industrial schools'. Within a year of his appointment twenty-two schools had been opened giving over a thousand children access to Catholic education.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Edward St. John, *Manning's Work for Children: A second chapter in Catholic Emancipation* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1929), p.28.

¹⁶² St John, p.29.

¹⁶³ St. John, p.30.

¹⁶⁴ Alan McClelland, 'The making of young Imperialists: Rev Thomas Seddon, Lord Archibald Douglas and the resettling of British Catholic Orphans in Canada' in *Recusant History*: 19, No.4 (1989), 509-529 (p.510).

¹⁶⁵ St John, p.57.

¹⁶⁶ McClelland, p.510.

Manning fought for seventeen years¹⁶⁷ to have the Catholic children transferred from the workhouses to Catholic run schools and orphanages. At first he did so without much success and he used many emotive phrases to describe the situation. The children were described as prisoners; 'the flagrant injustice of detaining Catholic children for many years...in Protestant schools'¹⁶⁸; 'persistent refusal to liberate Catholic children'¹⁶⁹; and 'proselytism will compass sea and land to rob a Catholic child of its faith.'¹⁷⁰ The subject of the removal of Catholic children from Protestant organisations and workhouses will be dealt with later in the chapter.

One of the early homes to be opened was St Vincent's Home for boys in 1859. Twenty boys who had been looked after in other orphanages were brought to live in this home. The only record of where the boys came from is in this note: 'To this shelter were brought twenty boys, who were, up to that time, being maintained by different Conferences and charitable persons in various orphanages.'¹⁷¹ A house was rented in Brook Green Lane, Hammersmith and the twenty boys were cared for there. The *St Peter's Net* magazine, written in 1908, stated that St Vincent's Home began because:

five little children (three boys and two girls) had been left motherless through the crime of their father, a bad Catholic and a drunkard, who had murdered his wife ... These poor children were in danger of being sent to non-Catholic Homes.

¹⁶⁷ St John, p.89.

¹⁶⁸ St John, p.110.

¹⁶⁹ St John, p.111.

¹⁷⁰ St John, p.129.

¹⁷¹ *St Peter's Net* 'Fifty Years of Rescue 1859 – 1909' August 1908 (Catholic Children's Society, Westminster Archive) [hereafter referred to as CCSW], p.168.

To prevent this happening the Society of St Vincent de Paul, which was based in Paris, decided something had to be done. One boy was sent to an orphanage in Bruges, Lady Georgina Fullerton 'made provision' for the girls and the society looked after the other two boys and so in December 1859 the home was opened.¹⁷² A slightly different version is given by the author of *These my little Ones*. The unfortunate children were cared for as stated, however St Vincent's Home did not open without some controversy. A proposal was put forward to the St. Vincent de Paul Society stating that because there were ten boys being cared for in different orphanages, a home belonging to the Society should be established. However, although many members of the committee of the General Council were sympathetic to the proposal it was considered not to be within the 'scope of the rules' of the society. To which the author wrote 'blessed are the rules for the timorous and the unwilling'.¹⁷³ Throughout the book there are telling little comments which show the writer was not afraid to voice his opinion, although he chose not put his name to it. However some of the Brothers of the St Vincent de Paul Society decided to open an orphanage which they would support themselves but which would not be 'formally connected with the Society'. Thus St Vincent's Home came into being.¹⁷⁴

To qualify for admittance boys had to be orphans and also destitute, or they had to be 'in danger to their faith or morals.'¹⁷⁵ The second qualification would appear to be the more important as the theme runs through all the writing. The cost of maintaining a boy was set at about £13 a year and if possible his family were expected to help towards this. Very soon the home became too small and more room was needed.

¹⁷² *St. Peter's Net*, August 1908 (CCSW), p.168.

¹⁷³ Waugh, p.57.

¹⁷⁴ Waugh, p.57.

¹⁷⁵ Waugh, p.58.

After holding a 'bazaar' to meet the cost, the number of boys able to be cared for was raised to thirty. The boys were under the care of a retired sergeant and his wife and the home would appear to have been run on military lines with a strict discipline. The boys were responsible for the housework. A grey uniform was worn which was a distinctive feature when they went to the local schools.¹⁷⁶ As the need for more places grew the home had to move premises a number of times first to Queen Street, Hammersmith, then to North End Road, West Kensington and then to Harrow Road. The home in Harrow Road consisted of two houses next door to each other.¹⁷⁷

Until 1876 only boys who had a 'patron', someone who would undertake to finance them, could be cared for. After this time Lord Archibald or Father Douglas as he preferred to be known, took over the running of the orphanage and he began to appeal to 'the charitable public' for funds in order that all destitute boys could be taken in.¹⁷⁸ In fact Father Douglas financed much of the work from his own resources. In 1875 Cardinal Manning had urged him to take responsibility for St Vincent's 'as financial and accommodation needs were becoming pressing'. This he did for ten years, paying for the upkeep out of his own pocket after which he handed it over to his wealthy cousin Father Douglas Hope.¹⁷⁹

When the premises in Harrow Road were purchased Father Douglas met the cost from his own resources. He bought the first house for £3000. However when the neighbour, a doctor, heard that an orphanage was to be set up he immediately decided to sell his house and Father Douglas was able to acquire it for £2000. In this and

¹⁷⁶ Waugh, pp.58-59.

¹⁷⁷ *St Peter's Net* August 1908 (CCSW), p.168.

¹⁷⁸ *St Peter's Net* August 1908 (CCSW), p.168.

¹⁷⁹ McClelland, p.511.

other ways, he used all his wealth for the purposes of caring for the boys. He lived with the boys and the strict discipline of the previous superintendents was somewhat relaxed. It was said of him that 'The father, the elder brother, the priest, took the place of the drill-sergeant, and the home, the school, and the workshop replaced the barracks.'¹⁸⁰ A photograph of some of the boys shows them wearing suits of a strong thick material, all are wearing hats and they surround Father Douglas posing beneath a Crucifix. Another photograph of St Vincent's shows boys in knee length trousers, long socks and jumpers.¹⁸¹ The dates when the photographs were taken are not known, but the first must have been taken before Father Douglas retired in 1886.

Father Douglas founded St Vincent's Press and Bakery and built a Votive Church to Our Lady of Lourdes. This is a Church offered in fulfilment of a vow.¹⁸² The Church was financed entirely by subscriptions given for the purpose and took many years to build. Money troubles seemed to loom large and there was never enough to pay the day-to-day living expenses. When bills were piling up and there was debt amounting to about £900 Father Douglas took the older boys and walked with them to St Joseph's College, Mill Hill to say Mass. They did this early each morning for nine days and on the last day when he returned to his office an unknown lady came in and handed him £1000. This cleared the debt and left some over.¹⁸³ This was only one example of his belief in prayer and miracles. Another is told of two boys with incurable paralysis. One boy had curvature of the spine and was paralysed and the other paralysed due to 'nervous shock'. Both boys were miraculously healed after

¹⁸⁰ Waugh, p.65.

¹⁸¹ Waugh, photograph.

¹⁸² *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 2, ed by Lesley Brown (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.3603.

¹⁸³ Waugh, p.73.

being anointed with Lourdes water and having much prayer said for them.¹⁸⁴ Father Douglas retired from the orphanage in 1886 and it is written of him that he ‘followed the teaching of his Master: “Go, sell all thou hast and give it to the poor, and come, follow Me.”’¹⁸⁵

Father Hope, who for some time had been assisting at St Vincent’s, then took over. He was also a wealthy man and he used his money to make improvements to the orphanage. During his time a new refectory was built, an additional dormitory and a new asphalted playground. Also it is said that the sanitary conditions of the house were ‘brought up to the latest requisitions of sanitary science.’¹⁸⁶ The school was improved so that it met the requirements of the Education Department and it was staffed by trained teachers. This meant that it was available for the use of other boys from the parish. Like his cousin before him Father Hope was said to be a kindly man who tried to make the orphanage as homelike as possible. Due to ill health however he retired after three years.¹⁸⁷ The original number of twenty boys in 1859 increased rapidly and by 1908 there were 1000 boys being cared for.¹⁸⁸

Boys again were the concern of Father William Barry who opened a home in the East End of London. The house at Rose Lane, Stepney opened on the 31st December 1887 and was called St Joseph’s home. During the first year 150 boys were sheltered. Although Father Barry was said to be a frail man, he worked hard living with and

¹⁸⁴ Waugh, p.71.

¹⁸⁵ Waugh, p.75 [The quotation is found in The Authorised Version of the *Bible* St Mark’s Gospel, chapter 10 and parts of verse 21. The author would however have taken it from the Douai-Rheims version which is a Catholic translation of the Bible from the Latin Vulgate into English. The Douai-Rheims version was revised between 1749 and 1752 by Richard Challoner and would be the one in use by Catholics in the nineteenth century].

¹⁸⁶ Waugh, p.81.

¹⁸⁷ Waugh, p.71.

¹⁸⁸ *St Peter’s Net* August 1908 (CCSW), p.170.

caring for the boys. Soon more accommodation was needed and so he opened a home in Commercial Road. This was for the younger boys who lived there under the care of a matron and next door to it he opened a home for girls. There is no other information about this home. Boys would appear to be the first concern of the author of the book. The children Father Barry cared for were described by Cardinal Manning as 'orphans, outcasts, abandoned waifs and strays, rescued from Protestant institutions, or from the gutters of the street.'¹⁸⁹ Father Barry gave them not only shelter he gave religious teaching and also taught them trades such as 'carpentering, boot-making, tailoring, housework'.¹⁹⁰ After a year the home had become too small and a house in Enfield was bought. This building had been a school and so had all that was necessary for the boys to move in. The home at Stepney was kept for a while as a receiving home before being closed.

A few case histories are recorded by Waugh which adds interest and flesh to the bare bones of the records. One night a boy of sixteen arrived, cold, wet, hungry, penniless and friendless. His father had died in Ireland a few years earlier and his mother six months before in hospital in London. Father Barry admitted him and after a few months helped him to get a job as a baker. A four year old was brought by his penniless actress mother; when he was undressed he was found to be covered in bruises and very undernourished. A twelve year old girl and her seven year old brother were brought in, both 'seething with vermin'. Their father, it was stated, was in and out of prison and their mother had deserted them. There were also those parents who were described as 'deserving' of help: a mother brought her children so that she could find work to keep herself. Her husband had gone to Australia and she

¹⁸⁹ Waugh, p.84.

¹⁹⁰ Waugh, p.85.

was waiting for him to send the passage money for her and the children. She said that if the orphanage could not take the children they would all have to go into the workhouse. The children were taken and the mother paid a small amount from her earnings for their keep. When a few months later the father sent for them the family were re-united.¹⁹¹ For hundreds of children who could not be cared for in one of the homes, Father Barry provided food.

St Joseph's, Enfield opened about 1890 and closed in 1962. It was a home for boys aged five to fourteen, run by the Sisters of charity of St Vincent de Paul. Some photographs which are available show a large dormitory with rows of beds but no personal lockers next to them. The dining room had long tables with bench seats. The school was also shown as being on the premises. In 1891 there were 138 boys resident. So it was a large orphanage which was not run on the family group system.¹⁹² A photo of some of the boys shows them wearing short trousers, jumpers and white collars. There are three nuns standing behind the boys.¹⁹³ The photograph was probably taken after 1900.

When Father Hope died in 1890, Father Barry was appointed to be administrator of St Vincent's and until his own death he administered the three homes St Vincent's, Enfield and Stepney. There is no mention of the home for girls and what became of that. Father Barry died in 1894 having done the work of caring for destitute children for seven years. During that time 2000 applications were made and only 800 children taken in. The danger that he believed the children faced was that of 'losing the

¹⁹¹ Waugh, pp.87-89.

¹⁹² photocopies (CCSW, Feltham CR-ma).

¹⁹³ Waugh, photograph.

precious inheritance of their faith, or of never receiving it'.¹⁹⁴ After Father Barry died Father Bans took over. Further information on this work is not available, but from the figures given it is obvious that there were many more destitute children than places available to care for them.

An orphanage for which there is some statistical evidence is St Mary's, North Hyde, opened in 1854. There is no record of one particular person being instrumental in opening the orphanage, but it is recorded that after a few years Cardinal Manning put it under the care of the Brothers of Our Lady of Mercy of Malines in Belgium. The early buildings had been used as an army barracks during the Napoleonic war, and these were added to in the 1870s. It was a large orphanage, home to up to 600 boys. In the extensive grounds there were sports fields, orchards and a farm.¹⁹⁵ The earliest ledger preserved is dated 1871-1899 so there is no information available of the children taken in during the early years.

How the day-to-day running of the home was organised or the way in which the boys were cared for is not known. However some statistics can be gleaned from the ledgers. These contain lists of boys' names with their age, and columns entitled: parentage, baptised, confession, communion, confirmation, Catechism, reading, and writing. This demonstrates how important the teachings and practices of the Catholic Church were considered to be. If it could not be verified whether a boy had been baptised or not, he was 'baptised conditionally'.¹⁹⁶ Another fact which becomes clear is that if at all possible family members were expected to pay towards the upkeep of

¹⁹⁴ Waugh, p.93.

¹⁹⁵ St Mary's Orphanage, North Hyde (CCSW, PA Misc North Hyde) photocopy.

¹⁹⁶ St Mary's Orphanage Ledger 1871-1899 (CCSW) [in order that individual children should not be identified no page numbers will be recorded when referring to the ledgers].

their child. If the boy was an orphan and had no close family then he would be paid for from a charitable fund. Two examples of the particulars given are as follows: a ten year old boy was transferred from another orphanage, his parents being dead. He had been baptised and made confession but had not taken communion or been confirmed. He knew the catechism a little and could also read and write a little. There was no one who could be responsible to pay for him so he was paid for from 'funds' that the orphanage had access to. In 1875, the same year he was taken in, he was emigrated to Canada. No other details about his later life were recorded.¹⁹⁷ Another boy was only in the orphanage for a month, being admitted in March and discharged to return to his own home in April. He had a mother but no father was recorded. It can be deduced that he had been instructed in the Catholic faith because 'yes' is written in the baptism, confession, communion, confirmation and catechism columns. His uncle was responsible for paying for him whilst in St Mary's. The figure quoted was £16.¹⁹⁸

In 1871 twenty-six boys were admitted aged between six and fifteen years. All but one of them had a sponsor and he was paid for from an 'available fund'. Seven were paid for either by mother or father – mostly about £16, which was a considerable sum of money to find. Eleven were paid for from a patriotic fund administered by a church and the rest either by a relative or friend. There are no details about where they came from or where they went except for one who returned home. Neither is the length of time spent in the orphanage given. The record of the twenty-six boys is as follows:¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ St Mary's Orphanage Ledger 1871-1899 (CCSW).

¹⁹⁸ St Mary's Orphanage Ledger 1871-1899 (CCSW).

¹⁹⁹ St Mary's Orphanage Ledger 1871-1899 (CCSW).

- Parentage Mother – 17
 Father – 1
 Parents – 1
 None listed – 7
- Baptised Yes – 22
 As protestant – 3
 No – 1
- Confession Yes – 11
 No – 15
- Communion Yes – 7
 No – 19
- Confirmation Yes – 4
 No – 22
- Catechism Yes – 4
 Fairly – 2
 A little – 6
 No – 14
- Reading Yes – 7
 Fairly – 2
 A little – 6
 No – 11
- Writing Yes – 7
 Fairly – 1
 A little – 5
 No – 13

In 1875, 105 boys were admitted and of these twenty-eight were paid for from an available fund. Twenty-six are listed as either having no parents, parents dead or deserted by parents. Two are listed under the baptism column as Protestant, and only two could read and write, the rest were either 'no' or 'a little'.²⁰⁰ There is no record of what happened to them later in life. The column which should give this information was most often left blank. For some there was a short reference. For example 'emigrated to Canada', 'returned home'. One boy who was admitted at the end of 1873 at the age of thirteen was sent to the 'Army Service Corps as a Tailor' just seven months later.²⁰¹

The ledgers contain information about the boys' position within the religious life of the Catholic Church on entry to the orphanage, but nothing about their character or the way they behaved whilst in the home. This demonstrates the relative importance placed on sacramental matters by the authorities. It is also indicative of whether the parents were nominal or practicing Catholics. The Catholic education of the children was believed to be of paramount importance in order that they would not be lost to the faith. Although many were paid for by a family member, they were all from extremely poor families. The question of payment was a common factor as was seen in an example earlier at St Joseph's home. The mother had placed her children in the care of Father Barry and then 'paid a trifle' from her 'scanty earnings' for their upkeep. Of this family it was said that 'the self respect of a worthy Catholic family was saved from the pauper's taint.'²⁰² When Catholic homes appealed for money for the work of child-care it was to the Catholic community that they went and not the wider public. Unfortunately a large proportion of urban Catholics were extremely

²⁰⁰ St Mary's Orphanage Ledger 1871-1899 (CCSW).

²⁰¹ St Mary's Orphanage Ledger 1871-1899 (CCSW).

²⁰² Waugh, p.89.

poor, many destitute themselves. There were some wealthy Catholics, mainly from the old established families who were willing to help, some to give everything, as was the case of Father Douglas.

The ledger which gave the above statistics does not appear to give the full story. There is another large ledger entitled ‘Return of Catholic Workhouse Children’²⁰³ which lists children who were transferred from various workhouses to different Catholic orphanages. There were a large number of children who were sent to St Mary’s North Hyde but none of their names appear in the previous register. It can perhaps be assumed that one register contained the names of children privately admitted and the other workhouse children. However, the second register does not give any extra information, apart from previous residence and destination. Some statistics for 1871 with regard to the workhouse children, who were transferred to St Mary’s, give a similar picture to the previous figures. 178 boys, aged between seven and fifteen, were admitted for the first time; it states that ‘re-admissions are not included’.²⁰⁴ There are no figures for the latter children.

- Parentage None – 43
 One - 112
 Two – 23
- Catechism Fairly - 7
 A little - 25
 No – 146
- First Confession Yes – 47
 No – 131

²⁰³ Register of Catholic Workhouse Children 1, 1870 – 1911 (CCSW).
²⁰⁴ Westminster Diocesan Education Fund (CCSW, W2), p.50.

- First Communion Yes - 17
 No – 161
- Been Confirmed Yes – 12
 No – 166
- Reading No - 135
 A little – 27
 Fairly – 16
- Writing No – 142
 A little – 24
 Fairly – 12

Of the 472 children resident in the orphanage in May 1872:

- 355 were being paid for by various workhouses
- 41 were supported, fully or partly by relatives or benefactors
- 27 by the Diocese of Westminster
- 8 by the Diocese of Southwark
- 36 by a 'Patriotic Fund'
- 5 partly by the 'Immaculate Conception Charity',²⁰⁵

This would demonstrate a totally different method of funding to that of the majority of child savers who appealed to the general public for money. The belief that God would supply what was needed through the hands of other Christians was a common standpoint. These figures also show that many of the workhouses were quite willing to transfer Catholic children to be cared for within their own faith when a suitable

²⁰⁵ Westminster Diocesan Education Fund (CCSW, W2), pp.50-51.

place was prepared for them. However as will be demonstrated later this was not always the case.

The Annual report 1872 for 'The Westminster Diocesan Fund for Poor Children' gave an inspector's report of the St Mary's Orphanage. The number of boys recorded was 460; whether they were all resident is not clear. Some could well be boys from the surrounding parish attending for education. The inspector's report for October 1871 gave some interesting facts; this being the same year that the above statistics were obtained from the first register. On Tuesday 3rd October 1871 there were 493 boys aged between seven and sixteen. Most of the boys who were resident were from the workhouses,²⁰⁶ and so from this statement it can be assumed that not all of the boys were resident. The inspector went on to describe the accommodation which he said was kept very clean and had 'plenty of ventilation'; this makes it sound rather clinical, and cold and draughty especially in the winter. There was a large indoor playroom for wet weather and a large outside playground; also a large swimming bath which was filled with 'tepid water'. All of these things would enable the boys to have plenty of physical exercise. There were six very large bedrooms, seventy-two feet by thirty feet, and seventy-two boys slept in each one. A very strict regime would have had to be enforced to control such large numbers. It would not appear to be very homelike, and individuality would be hard to encourage. However the inspector made the point that there was a 'separate towel and comb for each boy.' As well as a school there were workshops to teach the boys the trades of boot-making and tailoring. The orphanage stood in four acres of ground, part of which was used for the growth of

²⁰⁶ Westminster Diocesan Education Fund (CCSW), p.6.

fruit and vegetables.²⁰⁷ The description given of every part of the orphanage emphasises its size. The word 'large' is continually used and it is obviously intended to impress on the reader of the report that this is a spacious good environment for the boys.

When boys came before the courts they were often ordered to be detained in an Industrial School until the age of sixteen. A cause for concern to the Catholic authorities was that they were sometimes sent to Protestant organisations. One reason for this was that often there was no representative from the Catholic Church in the court and so juvenile offenders were given into the care of one of the Protestant carers who were represented. Also there were not sufficient places available in Catholic institutions. One that did exist however was St Nicholas' Industrial School. Again there are few details available but some examples are as follows. One nine year old boy was charged with stealing £2 and ordered to be detained until he was sixteen. He had a mother and a stepfather who was a paperhanger. His character was said to be 'bad'.²⁰⁸ Another boy aged thirteen was charged with 'wandering' and was ordered to be detained until he reached the age of sixteen. Both his parents were dead and his previous character had been 'good'.²⁰⁹ This boy was obviously homeless. In 1880, forty-nine boys were admitted between the ages of eight and thirteen. They were all sentenced to be detained until the age of sixteen. Forty-five had either one or both parents living all of whom were said to be very poor; two of them were said to be bad and one mother was a 'disorderly woman'. The reasons for coming before the courts were as follows:

²⁰⁷ Westminster Diocesan Education Fund (CCSW), p.7.

²⁰⁸ St Nicholas Industrial School, Admission Book 1879-1901 (CCSW).

²⁰⁹ St Nicholas Industrial School, Admission Book 1879 – 1901 (CCSW).

- Begging 11
- Stealing 15
- Wandering 2
- In Bad Company 8
- Beyond Control 5
- Truants 7
- No reason given 1

Of these boys only three had a previous bad character, four had a fair character, nine had a previous good character but for thirty-three their character was unknown. This would lead one to suspect that either most were first time offenders or else they had come before another court previously. It is known or at least suspected that boys often did not give their true name or age when charged in the hope of a lighter sentence. The boys were all detained until the age of sixteen which for some meant eight years and for others only three years. This would seem to be in order to ensure they received an education and training for employment. It also kept them away from the influences that had brought them before the court in the first place.²¹⁰

As already stated, recording the care existing for girls does not seem to have been a priority for Waugh, consequently there is little information available. He does however give a short account of an institution which came about by the care of one individual who saw the need. This was St Mary's Home for Girls. Elizabeth Twiddy, a poor 'capmaker', joined with two other young women to provide for two orphan girls. When Twiddy died in 1859 her friend Fanny Wilson continued with this care

²¹⁰ St Nicholas Industrial School, Admission Book 1879-1901 (CCSW).

and from this the orphanage in Hammersmith evolved. In the fifty years from 1859 1000 orphan girls had been cared for.²¹¹

The rescue of Catholic children not only from the streets but also from the workhouses and Protestant institutions where they were not being taught the faith of their parents was a huge concern for the Catholic authorities. The next section concerns an orphanage in Norwood which was in the Southwark Diocese. I am using this as an example to demonstrate some of the problems experienced by the Catholic Church when trying to 'rescue' Catholic children from workhouses. In 1866 some correspondence between the managers of the Roman Catholic orphanage at Norwood and the Metropolitan Board of Guardians, was put before the House of Commons for their consideration. Two acts had previously been passed by Parliament making provision for Catholic children to be removed from workhouses and re-settled in Catholic orphanages. A letter of application seeking to implement this had been sent from the Catholic Orphanage at Norwood to twenty-one workhouses in the London area. This correspondence was subsequently put before the House of Commons. The application stated that the institution had been certified by the Poor Law Board 'as fitted for the reception of such children or persons as may be sent there by the guardians of any parish or union'.²¹² The request was then made that any girls resident in the relevant workhouse should be transferred to the orphanage where they could be brought up in the Catholic faith instead of in schools which were 'conducted on the principles of a religious denomination to which such children do not belong'. The letter stressed the importance of 'preserving in poor Catholic children the

²¹¹ Waugh pp.52-53.

²¹² House of Commons Parliamentary papers 'Correspondence between Managers of Roman Catholic orphanage Norwood and Metropolitan Board of Guardians, as regards children, 1866 Paper number 520 Volume LX1.483, Microfiche number 72.478.

<<http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.libezproxy.open.ac.uk>> [accessed 12 January 2006], p.1.

religious sentiment, without which they can never become useful members of society'.²¹³

With the form of application was included a copy of the certificate from the Poor Law Board stating that the orphanage at Norwood had been visited by an inspector and that he had satisfied the board that the school could be certified to take Catholic children. Another letter enclosed set out in more detail the request that was being made. The Act of Parliament was to 'provide for the Education and Maintenance of Pauper Children in certain Schools and Institutions' and Catholic children, it was stated, came under this heading. The Honorary Secretary, W.W. Doyle, wrote:

The measure was introduced and carried by Sir Stafford Northcote and others, with the view of enabling Boards of Guardians to send children to certain certified charitable institutions, which are conducted on the principles of the religious denomination to which such children belong.²¹⁴

With this he went on to state that the 'Community of Ladies' who had opened the orphanage at Norwood had applied for and received the necessary certificate and that Lord Petre and 'other influential Catholics' were establishing an orphanage for boys which would also be certified.²¹⁵ He then explained how the orphanage would operate and the facilities available for the girls and eventually boys. The object was to care for Catholic girls giving them an education and training for future employment. They would be taught 'needlework, household work, cooking, washing, ironing', all duties which would enable them to become 'domestic servants'.

²¹³ Parliamentary papers, p.2.

²¹⁴ Parliamentary papers 'Enclosure 2', p.2.

²¹⁵ Parliamentary papers 'Enclosure 2', p.2.

The orphanage where they would live had been designed to accommodate a large number of children. There were classrooms, dormitories, refectories, kitchens, and a chapel which were all he said 'properly heated, lighted and ventilated.' Within this orphanage the children would also receive Catholic teaching which they could not receive in the workhouse. He stated that the girls were given after-care when they were old enough to go to work and that they would be rewarded if their character was good and they had remained in the same situation for a number of years. There was also a plan to use a large house which stood in the grounds for a 'servants' home'. This was to be where girls who left a job would be kept occupied until another situation could be found for them. In this way he said that all the girls who were so cared for 'need never again become paupers, unless by their own misconduct.'²¹⁶

The correspondence was sent to twenty-one Unions all of whom replied declining to transfer any children. In most cases no reason was given, just a statement to say that they declined. In one case it was stated that there were no Catholic children in the workhouse at that time but if any were admitted they would have 'no objection to diminish the numbers in this house by sending them'.²¹⁷ A few of the Unions said the matter was 'under consideration' but no further reply was forthcoming. One union stated that to accede to the request would 'be productive of great inconvenience as well as increased expense' and so they declined.²¹⁸ The nature of these replies would be the reason for the correspondence being sent for consideration to the House of Commons. The Act was not being adhered to. However, eventually, the problem with the workhouses' handing over Catholic children was resolved by Cardinal Manning after a seventeen year struggle.

²¹⁶ Parliamentary Papers 'Enclosure 2', p.3.

²¹⁷ Parliamentary papers 'Reply from the Parish of St James, Clerkenwell', p.8.

²¹⁸ Parliamentary Papers 'Reply from the Whitechapel Board of Guardians', p.7.

Since the Reformation there had been strong anti-Catholic feeling in England, and even after Catholic emancipation, there was still much distrust and fear connected with this branch of the Christian faith. In particular many evangelical Christians believed that Catholicism was an erroneous faith. One noted example, Dr. Barnardo, found himself on the wrong side of the law on more than one occasion, accused of abducting children. One such case was reported in the *Weekly Herald* and the headline states 'A Protestant paper scarifies the oily hypocrite'. The *Weekly Herald*, which was obviously a Catholic newspaper, was reporting with some glee that the *Evening Dispatch*, a Protestant newspaper, was very scathing about Dr Barnardo. The case in question was of a boy who had been placed in the care of Barnardo by his mother who was unable to support him. After a year she tried to see him but was unable to make contact in person or by letter. She complained about this to her niece, a practicing Catholic, who advised her to ask for help from a priest. This she did and the struggle for access to her son began. By this time she not only wanted access but also to remove him from Barnardo's care and placed in a home where he would be taught the Catholic faith. The case was complicated because the boy had been baptised a Catholic and subsequently baptised in a Protestant church. When the case came to court the judgement was finally given that the boy should be handed over to be brought up in a Catholic orphanage and school. This was a blow to Barnardo and he immediately took the case to the court of appeal. Again he lost and so he finally had to admit defeat.²¹⁹ The article continued in a contemptuous vein saying that 'proselytising is one of Dr Barnardo's main objects' and suggested that Barnardo would use the court case as publicity to make more money. The writer of the article

²¹⁹ Gillian Wagner, *Barnardo* (London: Spottiswoode, 1980), pp.230-231.

suggested that it was said of him 'his skill is unrivalled among all the tribe of charity-beggars'.²²⁰

The author of *These my Little Ones* wrote that it had been discovered that one-fifth of the children in Barnardo's thirteen homes had been baptised Catholics but were then being brought up as Protestants.²²¹ Here the author criticized bitterly the inadequate child-care available for Catholic children:

That such a multitude of our Catholic children should have been gathered into one set alone of the proselytising institutions of the country – how many more were to be found in other Protestant institutions God only knows – to be despoiled of their Faith, and brought up as enemies of the religion their fathers professed, is a shameful fact, and a crushing indictment of the *inadequacy* of preventive social organisation in the Catholic body in England.²²²

The fact that not enough provision was available for the large number of destitute Catholic children meant that desperate women would allow their child to be cared for by any means possible. A number of cases were detailed and in each case the mother or father was accused of selling their children for bread. An example of this was that of a mother who applied to get her boy into a Catholic home because she could not support him. There was no room so when someone offered to get him into a Barnardo home 'driven to absolute desperation, she sells her boy for food.'²²³

There were a number of such court cases from which Barnardo did not come out without a stain. Nevertheless it was done with the best intentions on his part in the

²²⁰ *Weekly Herald* 18th September 1881, contained in Scrap book S.1 c.1881–1894 (CCSW).

²²¹ Waugh, p.102.

²²² Waugh, p.103.

²²³ Waugh, p.105.

light of his strong beliefs. He did eventually give an undertaking that he would refer all new cases of destitute Catholic children to the Archbishop of Westminster. He refused to deal with individual homes because he would only acknowledge one authority and that the highest. Barnardo was adamant that he would not give up any child who was already resident in one of his homes unless he was compelled to by law. It had been a bitter fight on both sides both believing they were in the absolute right and both believing that they represented the best interests of the child's future well-being. The author of *These My Little Ones* wrote of him:

Dr Barnardo is entitled to admiration for his magnificent benevolence, to respect for his strong convictions and to merit for his great achievements. The dogged tenacity with which he fought the law and opposed the Church, were but evidence of refracted honesty. His very narrowness of prejudice, gave consistency to his action. His one idea was generous, and his one achievement noble. Let the curtain fall on him with words of peace and goodwill.²²⁴

The writer of *These My Little Ones* showed his anger and disappointment that a concerted effort was not made earlier to save the Catholic children. Father Douglas, he said, had brought the matter to the public attention again and again when appealing for funds and help to rescue the boys. However he felt that the general public was not willing to take on the collective responsibility. He said 'Still there seemed to lurk in the public mind and conscience the unspoken ... response of Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?"'²²⁵ The 'general public' of which he wrote would seem to be the Catholic people and hierarchy of the Church. The concerted effort did not happen until 1899 when the Crusade of Rescue was formed. The remit of this organisation

²²⁴ Waugh, p.117.

²²⁵ Waugh, p.77 [The quotation is from The Authorised Version of the *Bible*, Genesis chapter 4, part of verse 9 (See also note 36)].

was to make sure that every destitute Catholic child could be provided for and so brought up in the Catholic faith. The Society's aim was to rescue destitute Catholic children from the streets, and also from Protestant institutions.

When Herbert Vaughan was Bishop of Salford he had become concerned that 'a multitude of children were being lost to Catholicism'.²²⁶ On requesting a census to be taken he discovered that '8445' children were believed to be in 'danger of losing their faith'. Consequently he started the Rescue and Protection Society and began the recovery of Catholic children from Protestant institutions.²²⁷ In 1892 he became Archbishop of Westminster succeeding Cardinal Manning. On arrival in London to take up his new position he found many children there were in the same position as those in Salford. In 1894 he asked for a religious census to be taken in London. On reading the report he said it showed that one of the biggest causes of 'leakage' was the failure of the Catholic Church to be represented in the courts and so young offenders were placed in the care of the Protestant 'missionaries' who were there. Cardinal Vaughan wrote of the thousands of Catholic children who had been 'robbed of their faith' who had been emigrated and had their names changed and 'cut off from all Catholic influence.' They had been made 'aliens to the religion of their baptism' and he asked the question 'How far are we responsible for this waste?'²²⁸ Cardinal Vaughan then entered into a contract with Dr. Barnardo which was referred to earlier and although not entirely satisfactory on either side, nevertheless was a way to move forward. It was agreed that all Catholic children who were received by Barnardo would be passed on to the Catholic authorities. Barnardo would not concede that

²²⁶ Catholic Encyclopedia: Herbert Vaughan, < <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15311b.htm> > [accessed 22 November 2006], p.4.

²²⁷ Catholic Encyclopedia, p.5.

²²⁸ Waugh, p.120.

existing children should be transferred. He also made the point that if a child could not be accepted into a Catholic home he would keep that child and would not give them up subsequently.

In 1899 Cardinal Vaughan outlined his concerns in an open letter. The loss of Catholic children in the past he put down to four main causes; 'workhouses, police courts, certain Protestant benevolent institutions and destitution.'²²⁹ The problem with regard to the workhouses he said, had been dealt with and fifty-eight Unions in and beyond London were handing over Catholic children to be educated in Catholic schools. Many children however had been lost because there was no Catholic representative at the courts to receive juvenile offenders. Cardinal Vaughan wrote that if Catholics did not look after their own they should not complain if someone else did it for them. They should therefore be as willing to help these children as the Protestant agencies and so stop this 'leakage'.²³⁰ Another cause of loss he felt was the Protestant institutions many of which did not allow a priest to enter their homes, and the children who had been baptised Catholic were then lost to the faith. The remedy for this he said was in the hands of the Catholic Church who must endeavour to gather up all Catholic children into their own homes. Destitution he believed was the overall cause of many of the problems. Cardinal Vaughan divided it into physical and moral destitution, believing the second to be the more problematic. The Census had shown the fact that 18,000 children were in 'extreme danger of apostasy' because their parents were indifferent, irreligious or had made a mixed marriage.²³¹ He ended by giving a list of what was needed; someone to attend the courts; bed and board for at least a thousand more children; working boys' homes; working girls' homes; homes

²²⁹ Waugh, p.204.

²³⁰ Waugh, p.205.

²³¹ Waugh, p.208.

for disabled children; a refuge for 'broken-down cases for "another chance"' and a receiving home for juvenile offenders. All these things would need a large input of money.²³²

The Crusade of Rescue was set up and the individual homes were brought under the one umbrella for administration. The remit of the organisation was that every destitute Catholic child must be provided for. However, with the increased number of children, resources were stretched to breaking point. More buildings were required and by the end of the first year a debt was building up; by the end of 1903 a debt of over £2,000 had been incurred. The Crusade of Rescue began at the end of the period of my study and so I have only mentioned it briefly in order to concentrate on the earlier homes which began in the nineteenth century. According to the account given the Catholic homes did not work to the principle that no debt must be incurred. In 1907 the organisation nearly became bankrupt, ending the year with debt of £9,333. On receiving these accounts discussion of the problem followed. Many of the hierarchy wanted to pull back from some of the work and not accept any more children. However the agreement that 'no destitute Catholic child for whom no other provision could be made should be rejected' prevailed and the work carried on.²³³

Cardinal Vaughan believed in the family unit, that parents should care for their children and everything possible should be done to keep families together. He said even if the home was very poor the parents should be taught 'habits of thrift, decency, industry, and good conduct'. He believed that the children the Church should be caring for and be most concerned about were the orphans whose destitution was most

²³² Waugh, pp.212-213.

²³³ Waugh, pp.178-179.

likely to lead them to drift into crime. The other danger he saw to these children was that they might be tempted by the 'comforts of a warm home and a decent training' but where 'the *certain loss* of that Catholic faith which is necessary for salvation',²³⁴ would be inevitable.

The concern of how to provide immediate care for so many children, and also how to provide for their future, was a constant worry to the child savers. One day with this anxiety on his mind Father Douglas went to see Father Seddon, the secretary of the Westminster Diocesan Education Fund. He suggested that if forty boys were sent to Canada he would guarantee to find places for them to live and work. Father Seddon had been organising the taking of about forty children each year since 1874.²³⁵ He told Father Douglas that he would need to find the money for the boys' passages; this he did by writing to a friend who immediately supplied the money.²³⁶ Father Nugent of Liverpool had been the first person to send Catholic children to Canada in the 1870s when he took twelve girls and twelve boys. Fathers Seddon and Douglas believed that great care had to be taken in order that the children were supervised after emigration. Father Seddon's conditions for success were that no one should make money from the project and that situations should be already in place before a child was emigrated.²³⁷ On the matter of supervision he said it would be better if the children were visited two or three times in their first year and after that in special circumstances. He was also insistent that proper records must be kept.²³⁸ None of

²³⁴ Waugh, pp.209-210.

²³⁵ McClelland, p.515.

²³⁶ Waugh, p.72.

²³⁷ McClelland, p.515.

²³⁸ McClelland, p.517.

these records have survived in the archives in England.²³⁹ There are, however some records which relate to children emigrated in the years after 1900. The Catholic emigration programme was smaller than many of the other organisations. It is estimated that by 1902 only about 5000 of the approximately 50,000 sent were from the various Catholic organisations. The Southwark archives have copies of a quarterly journal 'Across the Sea', which began in 1896 to form a link with the children who had been emigrated. In the first copy there are letters from Father Douglas and Father St. John setting out the remit of the journal and both giving, and asking for, news²⁴⁰. There are also snippets from letters which had been received from emigrant boys. The letters are all from boys who had made a success of their lives: 'My cow presented me with a calf the other day'; 'I go to school, and I have lots of fun at kicking the football'; 'I have got pleasures and not troubles'; were just some phrases used.²⁴¹

When the Crusade of Rescue came into being it was felt that the emigration of Catholic children should also come under one umbrella to be called The Catholic Emigration Association. This began in 1902. As with all the agencies they believed that very special care needed to be taken in order that the children should be given the very best chance. Even though there are many criticisms of the various schemes involved in child emigration, they all believed they were doing it for the benefit of the children. How well each scheme actually operated is very difficult to assess.

²³⁹ The Web site for 'Young Immigrants to Canada' which is maintained by Marjorie P. Kohli states 'Records for the Catholic children in Canada were returned to England and some subsequently destroyed. However, the original records may still be available in Britain.'
<<http://www.des.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/children/Organizations/catholic.html>> [accessed 19 June 2006], p.1.

²⁴⁰ 'Across the Sea' Vol.1 (London: Southwark Press, 1896) (Catholic Children's Society, Southwark, Archives), p.1.

²⁴¹ 'Across the Sea' Vol.1, pp.3&4 .

Since the organisation of the emigration schemes under one umbrella did not occur until after 1900 I do not intend to investigate it at any great length, except to give one or two details. In 1902 Father Bans wrote an article giving particulars of how he envisaged the amalgamated scheme would be operated. Accompanied by Arthur Thomas, a barrister, he first travelled to Canada to make enquiries of seventy-five different authorities on child emigration. They visited children who had been previously emigrated and talked to their employers. They talked to church authorities, magistrates and police officials. From this investigation they formed an opinion of the best way to operate the scheme. They came to the conclusion that morally Canada was a 'purer' country and that the Catholic Church there was 'spiritually' stronger. There were more priests and a greater proportion of the population were of the Catholic faith. Father Bans wrote 'everywhere a more Catholic atmosphere prevails.'²⁴² The children were to be carefully selected and only the fittest and healthiest sent. Before emigration all children were to have 'made their First Confession, their First Communion, and have been Confirmed'. One rule that must be taken note of was that it was said that this process must not be rushed in order to have an early emigration.²⁴³

The employment terms that the children were to go under were divided into four categories. 'Helpers', who must be aged ten to thirteen years and would help around the house and farm; 'workers' aged fourteen and over to take situations on the farms; 'placed as though adopted', these children should be under nine years of age and should be treated as one of the family, educated and not expected to work at first; and 'boarded out', these children should also be under nine years of age and the farmer

²⁴² Waugh, p.218.

²⁴³ Waugh, pp.221-222.

was to receive about a guinea each month. For this he must see that the child was educated and trained. Father Bans put in a word of caution here saying that much care must be taken when placing a child especially in the latter case. 'There is more danger where a child is placed for payment than where it is received free.'²⁴⁴ All children of school age should be educated and all over ten paid a wage. The wages earned by the children were to be paid to the receiving Home by the employers where they would be saved in a bank for the child until they reach the age of eighteen. A child would be able to draw small sums from this at the discretion of the Home and receipts for all transactions would be given.²⁴⁵

Father Bans also mentioned the clothing the children would need for their journey and life in Canada. He appeared to have thought about the feelings of the children when he recommended that the boys should be dressed in a similar way to the Canadian boys. For girls he said that whilst their clothing should be serviceable it should also be 'attractive, especially for the younger ones.'²⁴⁶ Supervisory visits must be unexpected in order to ascertain the true state of the child. At each visit clothing and accommodation must be inspected and the Parish Priest asked about the child's 'spiritual and temporal welfare'. The first visit should be within three months of the child being placed and after that annually. However, if at the first visit the child or the employer had to be warned about anything then another surprise visit must be made within the next three months.²⁴⁷ Many aspects of this scheme would appear to be well thought out. Of course by this time many schemes had been running for over thirty years and smaller Catholic agencies had been emigrating children. The pitfalls

²⁴⁴ Waugh, pp. 221-223.

²⁴⁵ Waugh, p.233.

²⁴⁶ Waugh, p.234.

²⁴⁷ Waugh, pp.234-235.

others had found could be avoided. The paying of the child's wages into a bank operated by the Catholic receiving Home would appear to be a good idea. If operated correctly it would mean that no child would be working for nothing because his employer withheld his wages. Until 1910 a total of 7891 Catholic children had emigrated to Canada.²⁴⁸

A brief account of the 5000 children sent before 1902 is useful to ascertain how well they did. Many of these children went before the regulations just described were put in place. The record states:

Of the 5,000 or more children sent through Catholic agencies we have traced about ten who have left the Church and joined other religious bodies; about five who were not practising any religion; about ten girls who had gone morally wrong; three who were in homes for fallen women; one boy who was in prison; one who had a warrant out against him; one who was living by crime; seven who had been or were in reformatories; and three who were mentally deficient. About forty, therefore, are religiously or morally unsatisfactory, that is to say, under one per cent, so far as our observation goes.²⁴⁹

This report reads in a similar way to the reports put out by the other emigration organisations. They were all keen to claim success for their scheme and the contented future life of the children involved. The main concern in this report however does stress the religious status of the child.

²⁴⁸ Waugh, p.148.

²⁴⁹ Waugh, p.237.

Many of the children were sent to Catholic districts. These would most likely be of French descent. This would mean that as well as having to settle in a strange country they would also have to contend with an unknown language. One comment on this aspect was:

A much debated question here arises as to whether children should be placed in French families. We had a sentimental feeling against it, but we were unable to find any real objection to it. The girls so placed struck us as being particularly refined.²⁵⁰

It would seem that more care was taken to ensure that a child was kept within the Catholic faith than to ensure the transition to a strange country was as unproblematic as possible.

The only record from the children themselves is contained in six letters from boys and six from girls printed at the back of the book by Waugh. All the letters were positive and from children who were settled and happy. They were being well looked after and well fed. Snow was mentioned and the extreme cold but not in a complaining way. However loneliness was also implicit. Brothers and sisters were mentioned, news from the home or convent awaited eagerly. 'I wish my sister was coming. I would be delighted if she would,' wrote one girl.²⁵¹

In 1980, Joy Parr put forward the theory that because the Catholic Church could not afford to build enough separate institutions for their children they were more in favour of emigrating them to Canada.²⁵² It was considered to be better that they should be

²⁵⁰ Waugh, p.231.

²⁵¹ Waugh, p.251.

²⁵² Joy Parr, *Labouring Children: British Immigrant Apprentices to Canada, 1869 – 1924* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp.38-39.

with Catholic families in Canada than remain in England where they might lose their faith to 'the great widening sea of indifference, unbelief and Protestantism' that abounded in England.²⁵³ Although the latter statement about the fear of the children losing their faith is undoubtedly true, the number of children who were emigrated was small by comparison with the other organisations; that is of course if the figures given are accurate. When separate Catholic agencies were involved with emigration it is more difficult to arrive at exact numbers. Also from the few records that are available it is clear that there were a number of large orphanages opened in the London area and therefore, it could be assumed, elsewhere.

In the early years there was not a receiving home in Canada. Catholic Bishops 'welcomed' the children and saw them settled. McClelland states that the children taken by Father Seddon were received in three centres, Rimouski, St Patrick's Asylum, Ottawa and St Nicholas's Institute, Toronto. The children there were cared for by nuns.²⁵⁴ It is not clear whether these were set up for the purpose or whether they were existing Canadian institutions who were willing to take English children until they were settled in work or with families. However from about 1880 it was felt that someone should be prepared to take on the responsibility of overseeing the children and for a reception home to be available. To this end in 1890 a small house was purchased in Ottawa for the children from Southwark. In 1904 when the various projects were amalgamated the property owned by Southwark was given to the new joint society.

²⁵³ Parr, p.38.

²⁵⁴ McClelland, p.517.

The children in the various Catholic homes were not cared for in small family groups but rather in large orphanages. They wore a uniform and in some cases lived by a strict regime. Boys seem to have been the prime concern although when Cardinal Vaughan heard how many boys had been refused admission he said, 'If such be the state of the boys, what is the condition of their sisters? Their number may be less, because they excite more pity; but there is a life of infamy before many of them'.²⁵⁵ Why it was felt that the number of girls would be smaller is not very clear, unless it was thought that boys were more likely to be turned out of home to live on the streets. It could also be that relatives might find a girl useful in helping to care for younger children or to help around the house, and so would take her in. However the need to save a girl for moral reasons also is clear from the statement. The overriding purpose for saving the children was to make sure they were brought up in the Catholic faith, that they were given Catholic teaching and that the 'leakage' from the Catholic church was stopped. The personal belief of individual children does not seem to be addressed as it was with the evangelical child savers. It is undoubtedly true that genuine concern for individual children was a very real motive for many of the men and women in the day-to-day work. However the Church leadership seemed to be more concerned about the spiritual welfare than the physical wellbeing of the children. What is not in doubt was the personal dedication and sheer hard work of the priests and nuns who cared for the children. They gave their lives to the work seven days a week for very little personal reward, in many cases spending their not insubstantial personal wealth in the cause.

²⁵⁵ Waugh, p.209.

Chapter 9

From an Acorn to an Oak Tree

Charlotte Sharman

Charlotte Sharman (1832–1929), the founder of Sharman's Homes lived and worked in Southwark, south east London for most of her life. There is little archival information of her work with children, and what is available is limited in content and selective in detail. The only statistical data is recorded in two registers which give scant facts about the children. All personal details of the children's backgrounds and future lives it is believed were recorded on slips of paper and filed in envelopes. These were destroyed either when the homes closed in 1968 or years before when it was felt they were no longer needed.¹ On closure the remaining records were passed on to be cared for in the Dr. Barnardo's archives. Apart from the registers, all other information is found in the annual reports written by Sharman and in a biography by Marguerite Williams c.1930. The biography was composed from notes made by Williams after conversation with Sharman when she was ninety-four years of age. Much of the information therein is similar to that contained in the annual reports.

As a child Sharman was considered to be delicate; and was therefore raised at home, being educated by her mother. However, living to be ninety-seven years of age she disproved the forecast that she would die young. Her parents were members of the Congregational Church and with her sister she was brought up within this denomination. As an adult Sharman had a strong evangelical faith of her own and

¹ This information was supplied by Martine King, Archive and Administration Manager, After Care, Barnardo's, Barkingside 25th October 2005.

was a member of Westminster Chapel which had opened in 1841. The area where the Chapel was built was at that time ‘relatively undeveloped’ and was reported to be ‘an unhealthy poverty stricken slum – perhaps the worst in England’ and the Congregationalist community had felt that a ‘Christian witness’ was needed in the area.²

Congregationalism which can be traced back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1, held that the organisation of a church should be on Presbyterian lines and not Episcopal. In 1832 the Congregational Union of England and Wales was created but this was for ‘mutual consultation and edification’³ and not as a ruling body. Each church managed its own affairs, decided on its form of worship and appointed its own minister. The Statement of Faith published by the Westminster Chapel today states:

We are an Evangelical Bible believing Church with a long tradition of preaching the infallible truth of the Bible as inspired by God through the Holy Spirit. We seek to glorify God’s son Jesus Christ through obedience to His Word.⁴

From her life and work it would seem that this was very much the belief of Sharman and the Church as it was in those days. In 1842 Reverend Samuel Martin (1817–1878), was invited to be the first minister of Westminster Chapel. He was involved in many philanthropic works as well as being an evangelical Gospel preacher. The Chapel had opened with just twenty-two members although the building would seat 1500 people. By 1860 however the congregation had grown to such an extent that

² ‘Heritage of Westminster Chapel: Introduction and Origins’ <www.westminsterchapel.org.uk/index-7.html> [accessed 22 March 2006], p.1.

³ *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* ed by J.D. Douglas (Michigan: Regency, 1974), p.252.

⁴ ‘Statement of Faith’ <www.westminsterchapel.org.uk/index-6.html> [accessed 22 March 2006], p.1.

there was not enough room for them. In 1865 a new building was erected on the same site with seating for 2500 people.

With Martin's influence and example, her own home life and her inherent love of children, Charlotte Sharman eventually became involved in her own great philanthropic venture. Her aunt had given her a book about George Muller and his work with destitute children. This touched her deeply. Williams wrote: 'Less than thirty years after [George Muller began caring for children in Bristol], Charlotte Sharman began her smaller work, with as great a faith, and no less power.'⁵

Sharman's work as a child saver seemed to begin almost by accident. In 1862 she heard of the case of a young mother who when dying had dreaded the thought of her children having to go into the workhouse. When the mother died the inevitable happened and Sharman searched for another solution to the care of the two children. She believed that she was to be the answer to the mother's prayer that her children would not have to 'go to that dreadful place'. She contacted George Muller with a request that they be taken into his orphanage in Bristol. This was agreed, but there was some delay before they could be taken, and so during this time Sharman found foster care for them. She financed both this and the transfer to Muller's orphanage herself.⁶ After the first two, other children came to her notice, and over the next two years she had the care of thirty children, all of whom were boarded out until there was room for them in the Muller orphanage. Sharman paid all the expenses of this work from the money she earned as a teacher. She also made all the clothes the children

⁵ Marguerite Williams, *Charlotte Sharman: The Romance of a Great Faith* (London: The Religious Tract Society, n.d.), p.23.

⁶ Marguerite Williams, *Charlotte Sharman: The Romance of a Great Faith* [With a portrait and a foreword by J.C. Carlile] (London: The Religious Tract Society, c.1931), pp.28-30.

needed. With her sister she taught in a small school of twenty pupils which they held at their home. When Sharman was about twenty-nine her sister married and the school they had run together had to be closed. This meant that she was then reliant on any private teaching work that she could obtain.

Boarding out the children was not without its problems. Some people who thought they would be suitable for this work soon found it was more than they could cope with. Williams told the story of a ten year old girl who had been taken in by an old couple when her mother died. Unfortunately they had to leave her alone all day whilst they went to work. She soon began to run wild and they realised they could not care for her properly. Three maiden ladies who it was said were 'doers of many good deeds' then took her in, but she soon upset their quiet household. She sang songs that 'shouldn't be sung' upset family prayer times and mocked them, saying they were 'fools, to talk to nobody'. She also horrified them by her table manners.⁷ This child eventually came to Sharman who, it was said, was not easily shocked. She told her about God and answered her questions, the biggest one of which was about right and wrong. 'So the big question was answered: right is what God would have us do; wrong is what He would not have us do.' This satisfied the child and it is then recorded that she prayed her first prayer. Williams continued 'In similar ways did Miss Sharman lead one child after another along the paths where she herself had found the springs of life.'⁸ This individual teaching of one to one with the inevitable kindness for a lonely disturbed child is very similar to the account of Stephenson talking to a child whilst playing the organ, then telling a Bible story.

⁷ Williams, (c1931), p.33.

⁸ Williams, (n.d.), p.34.

Sharman, as did the other child savers, believed in the link between destitution and crime. She said, 'Every year hundreds of orphan children are sinking into destitution, and becoming initiated in a life of crime, who might by timely rescue be trained for usefulness here and happiness hereafter.'⁹ Usefulness in this world through diligence and hard work; and happiness in the life hereafter for those who had a personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, was the conviction of evangelical Victorians.

The work of helping destitute children was for Sharman a very private occupation and in many ways she would have preferred to keep it that way. However more and more children were coming to her notice. She realised that she would either have to close her 'eyes and ears' to the situation or ask for help.¹⁰ She spoke of her concerns to Rev. Martin, who suggested that she wrote a pamphlet for distribution in the Church informing people about the situation. Sharman had come to believe that what the children needed was a home where they could all live as a family. She wrote that the home was needed for '*destitute fatherless* children', it was to be 'perfectly free' without 'any sectarian influence' and without the need for patronage or election.¹¹ Many homes, which were available in the earlier part of the century, as discussed in a previous chapter, had accepted children by election. This meant that a sponsor had to be found before the child could be admitted. Sharman was very much against this practice; she wrote that she wished to open a home for children who were 'by poverty or friendlessness excluded from existing institutions, to which admission could only be gained by payment or election'.¹² Many people, she said, had 'spent their living on

⁹ A short Account of the Orphans' Home 1867-1881, Third Report (Liverpool University, Special Collections and Archives, D239.J7/2/1) [Hereafter to be referred to as LUSCA], p.3.

¹⁰ Williams, (n.d.), pp.34-35.

¹¹ Williams, (n.d.), p.35.

¹² First Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.3.

elections and were nothing the better but greatly the worse.’¹³ The home was to be a place ‘where they may spend a happy childhood, and learn to become useful members of society, and true followers of Christ.’¹⁴ It was also to be a home for girls, although in one or two instances boys were taken in for a short time. Even though Sharman stated ‘fatherless’ children, some were motherless and many were orphans, but as will become clearer she did not take in the ‘city arabs’. The Christian influence within the home came from Sharman’s own evangelical faith and that of Rev. Martin, and so would be within the Congregational tradition of the church where she worshiped. For any children who had not been baptised before entry, Martin performed the ceremony.

West Square, Southwark where Sharman lived is still very much as it would have been then. It is lined on four sides by five-storey terraced houses. There are roads leading off from two sides of the square. Each house has steps leading up to the front door and steps down to the basement door within the area railings. In the centre of the square is a fairly large garden surrounded by railings. A central plaque states that it commemorates the fact that the garden is over 200 years old. The square has a genteel air and gives the impression that those who lived there in the past were of reasonably affluent means. This square was where Sharman began her ‘orphan homes’. She believed that if there were more homes for nursery age children there would be less need for ‘rescue homes’, and prisons could ‘be pulled down and the ground on which they stood converted into playgrounds.’¹⁵ This would seem to be an idealised view of society.

¹³ First Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.5.

¹⁴ Williams, (n.d.), p.35.

¹⁵ Williams, (n.d.), p.36.

When her pamphlet was issued Sharman received just under £64, this was not enough to start the project. However more and more applications for help were coming to her notice. In response she prayed that if God wanted her to begin an orphan home more money would be donated for the purpose during the following week than during any previous week; however if the project was not to go ahead then no donations would be received. During the next week she received '£15.5s' with a promise of more to come.¹⁶ Sharman rented the house next door to her mother in West Square and on 6th May 1867 the first home was opened. For several years Sharman taught whenever she could get work in order to finance the project, but after receiving a small legacy she was able to devote more time to the growing number of children. She was never a wealthy woman but her biographer states that she paid all her own living expenses as well as adopting four children to bring up as her own daughters.¹⁷

Whilst her work was in fostering children to people in the area Sharman was working primarily alone. However as soon as she decided to go ahead with an 'orphan home' she knew that she would need the help of others. In her first report which was published during 1867 she gave details of progress during the early stages of the project. Eight ministers were named who 'kindly consented to act as Referees, and to receive donations'; two auditors were also named.¹⁸

In her reports Sharman not only gave a brief outline of events and thanked people for donations, she also gave a mini-sermon. For example she wrote about how God 'supplies the needs through people'. She illustrated this with two stories; God supplied the manna in the wilderness to feed the Children of Israel after the exodus

¹⁶ First Report (LUSCA D239/37/2/1), p.5.

¹⁷ Williams, (c.1931), p.40

¹⁸ First Report (LUSCA D239/J7/2/1), cover page.

from Egypt; and Jesus fed 5000 people with just five loaves and two small fish. She wrote, 'So now, though we do not expect the orphans to be fed by miracle, we do believe that God will supply all their needs by the hands of His people.'¹⁹ With this she showed her confidence in the power of prayer. Some information is repeated in every report, for example Sharman always stated that: *'to be eligible, a child must be an orphan and destitute; and, if over twelve years of age, must give satisfactory reference as to character.'*²⁰ [italics original]

When the home had been opened a year a second report was published giving details of events during the year. This was obviously an important report because it would show how well established the work had become. The first girls to be resident were the thirteen who had been fostered in the surrounding area. It was then only a partly furnished home due to funds not being available to complete the furnishing of the whole. At this time three of the girls were able to go back to live with their families because their circumstances had improved. So for a while there were only ten in the home who were cared for by a 'matron'.²¹ By July the family had grown to eighteen girls and on 24th July 1867 an opening service was held at Westminster Chapel. This service, said Sharman, was to inform friends and also to seek 'the blessing of God on the infant Institution.'²² Following the service donations were received which meant the rest of the house could be furnished and so by August ten more girls were admitted.

¹⁹ First Report (LUSCA D239/J7/2/1), p.7.

²⁰ Ninth Report 1875 (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.10.

²¹ Second Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.3.

²² Second Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.4.

Still more applications for admittance came, so in order to overcome the difficulty of room Sharman fostered out some of the younger children and she was then able to take in six older girls. Before the end of the first year larger premises were acquired and by the end of that year there were forty-two children being cared for. However the house would hold eighty when it was fully furnished. Sharman finished the report with these words:

My earnest desire is to furnish the Home *fully, and to see every room filled with little rescued fatherless children* – a desire which would be shared by anyone who could know the sorrowful histories of the numerous little applicants waiting admission.²³

This was just one of the implicit appeals she made each year.

Sharman only cared for girls and any boys from an orphaned family were passed on to other orphanages. However she always tried to keep sisters together. She mentioned many times the need to do this and spoke out strongly against those who did not do so. She gave the example of five orphans who had lost both father and mother within a short space of time. If they had been separated she said ‘each one of them would have suffered five fresh rendings of heart strings.’ She appealed to other ‘benevolent people’ who had been known to settle children hundreds of miles away from their siblings, to ‘consider the possibility of avoiding such painful separations.’²⁴ Always it would appear her first thought was for the feelings of the child. However the separation of brothers and sisters does not seem to have been an issue for her.

²³ Second Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), pp.10-11.

²⁴ Eleventh Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), pp.8-9.

Although Sharman nearly always referred to the children as orphans many of them had a mother who had been left destitute by the death of her husband. One example of the help that was given was of an orphaned family of seven children. One of the girls was taken ill and the parents who were close to starvation soon caught the illness. The father, who had been out of work for some time, died first; followed soon after by his wife. When found the children were in 'a deplorable state', they had no food, warmth or adequate clothing. The youngest was only seven months and was in very poor health. The four girls were taken into the Sharman home and the three boys were placed in other orphanages.²⁵

Only those children who had no other means of help were considered for admittance and any child that Sharman fostered out was maintained by funds in the same way as those in the home. Sometimes she fostered out a child if it would make room for more children to be taken in. From the beginning she was adamant that no debt should be incurred and only when money was available could she take in more children. This meant also that the rooms of the house were only furnished as money became available. This it would appear was essentially an evangelical point of view. Many of the philanthropists had the same strict rule and would always wait for money to be available before making any expenditure.

It is recorded that from 24th July 1867 to 6th May 1868 the donations received amounted to £551. 6s. 7¾d and that during the same period twenty-four more orphans had been received. The record also states that ten other children who were 'not

²⁵ Third Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), pp.7-8.

exactly eligible' were being given some maintenance in their own home.²⁶ In May 1870 after the home had been opened three full years, Sharman proved her point that God provided just what was needed, no more no less.

- January 1867 there were 8 orphans and donations of £15. 14s. 9d.
- January 1868 there were 34 orphans and donations of £68. 9s. 1d.
- January 1869 there were 80 orphans and donations of £120. 3s. 0d.
- January 1870 there were 110 orphans and donations of £151. 4s. 0d.²⁷

By this she showed that as the number of children grew the amount of provision increased, although not quite in proportion. It did however prove to her that God was watching over them and sending just as much as they needed. Nevertheless there was not a surplus so they had to go on trusting and relying on God. The Bible text written at the beginning of the very first report read: 'So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart: and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands, – *Psalms* lxxviii. 72',²⁸

In nearly every report Sharman reiterated her three rules which she said had never been broken, no voting, no begging, and no debt. She was even willing to halt the work on the new building when it seemed that the money was not available to carry on. However at the last minute when money arrived the work continued. She always gave information of where money was needed and how it came. She included in each report a list of all the gifts and donations that had been received. The gifts ranged from parcels of clothing, material, sheets and bedding, furniture, Bibles, books, fruit and vegetables, groceries, bread, dripping, toys. Nothing was too small or large to be

²⁶ Second Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), pp.10-11.

²⁷ Fourth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.7.

²⁸ First Report (LUSCA D239/J7/2/1), p.1.

mentioned. There was also a list of all money received in donations and a summary of the money received and spent. Sharman often said that she did not make appeals for money; however she did make implicit appeals:

I wish all who read this, could see the comfort and convenience afforded by the *portion* of the New Home which is completed – it would stir their hearts to become shareholders in the remainder of the Building, and to hasten on the time when the possession of the entire Home shall gladden our hearts, even as the very prospect of such a consummation, now strengthens us to work, and pray, and hope.²⁹

Information for sending donations was also given:

All who send donations are particularly requested to state, whether they wish them applied to the Building fund, or to the general purposes of the Home, also to give their names and *full address* ... May I remind my readers that I do not canvass for donations, or collect subscriptions.

Who to make the cheques and postal orders payable to was then stated.³⁰

One method of raising money was a system of sponsorship she had put in place. This was not a scheme whereby a child could be sponsored in order to come into the home but one by which a child already in care could be sponsored. She reported that one man was sponsoring sixteen children. She had set the cost of this at £15 a year to keep a child. This is very similar to modern day sponsorship schemes run by some relief charities.

²⁹ Tenth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.5.

³⁰ Tenth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.13.

Sharman had taken the house next to that owned by her Mother for her first home in 1867. For a few months everything seemed to be going smoothly; but then she was given notice to leave or face a sharp increase in the rent. A large house close by in South Street, which belonged to 'The Middle Class School Corporation', was standing empty and she asked for, and was given, permission to use it at a very moderate rent. As a result the orphanage moved on 20th March 1868 less than a year after first opening. Sharman gave a description of the accommodation now acquired:

The present Orphanage is as thoroughly adapted to the purposes as any private house can be. The rooms are large and numerous, and there is an extensive garden and good play-ground. There are separate school-rooms for the infants and elder girls, and a convenient work-room, where the elder children learn superior needle-work, and feel a pride in earning something toward the maintenance of the Institution.³¹

Sharman had procured orders from some of the ladies in the neighbourhood who wished to have sewing done by the girls and a local firm had donated a sewing machine for their use.

Towards the end of the second year more and more applications for entry were made so she took on a second house in West Square close to the large home. When this was furnished it would hold twenty-five girls. She decided that the second house would be for the younger children. Soon a further house became vacant in West Square and so this too was acquired making three houses in all. Sharman decided that the nursery for the babies would be at 32 West Square, the second house to be acquired; the children five to eight years old would live in 44 West Square, the third house to be

³¹ Second Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.9.

acquired, and those over the age of eight would live in the larger home in South Street. Although this would obviously split up families Sharman seems to have thought of this and kept to her principle that sisters should be kept together as much as possible. Her plan was that the older girls would take it in turns to assist the nurses in the nursery and younger girls' home. This she said was so that 'the little ones are not cut off from the companionship of their elder sisters'. She also said that the younger girls who were old enough to attend school should go to South Street for a few hours each day to be with their sisters.³² Whether in all cases she was referring to siblings or using the term in a more general way is not clear.

Three years after the first home opened with just ten girls there were 130 girls in the three homes. It was also noted at that time that the homes were open to visitors between three o'clock and five o'clock each afternoon and if anyone wanted to see Miss Sharman she was available every morning before eleven o'clock. This changed as the years went by and in later years visiting was limited to one afternoon a week. By 1871 a fourth house had been obtained, thirty-three more girls taken in, and in all there were 180 in the four homes. During the four years the home had been in existence 221 children had been cared for. Some of these had left but it was noted that many still considered the orphanage to be their 'home'. However three girls had been dismissed because 'their example was injurious to the other children'. No other details are given.

From 1871 there was mention on the frontispiece of the report of a country branch at Hampton. Unfortunately there is nothing in the reports about the purchase or rental of

³² Fourth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.8.

this property. In 1874 Sharman wrote how necessary it was that they had a purpose-built Home. The property at Hampton whilst good in itself was inconvenient because of its distance from London. Her vision was of a purpose-built place where the Hampton and London children could all live together. The other reason she felt this was necessary was that the London property was becoming dilapidated and in much need of repair. It was also too small and inconvenient for the number of children who lived there. However in 1876 the branch at Hampton was closed and the children moved to Gravesend and not back to Southwark as had at first been envisaged. Gravesend was on the rail link, and Sharman said this was more convenient making it easier to get to. Also the 'bracing air' was good for the children.³³

Sharman began to look ahead and knowing that the home in South Street was let to them on a temporary measure she decided that a fund should be opened specifically to build a purpose-built home. In 1872 the owners put the property up for sale. This meant that Sharman had to either buy it or find other premises. The decision was taken to buy and then as funds became available, build a new orphanage on the site. The sum of £10,000 was the estimated amount needed for the project. Sharman determined that as soon as £4000 was available they would purchase the freehold and then build as and when money came available. She had clear ideas of how she envisaged the new building, it was to have a home-like atmosphere, comfortable but not grand. She also wanted to avoid 'massing the children together in large numbers' because she felt that a much stricter discipline would then be necessary and that would 'impair that light-hearted cheerfulness which is not only one of the lovely

³³ Tenth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.9.

adornments of childhood but a precious gift from heaven'.³⁴ The sentiments express the same view as Dr Stephenson when he was putting forward his idea of the family system.

The numbers kept growing and soon there were 206 girls in the homes. The new building which was soon to be constructed in the grounds of the old one had been planned very carefully. There was to be a large hall where everyone could meet for services but the other rooms would be of 'moderate dimensions'. This Sharman said would 'preclude any unnatural and unhomelike herding together'.³⁵ From the few details given it does not appear that the girls were cared for in small family groups; because 'large bright dormitories' are spoken of and a large playroom with 'lockers' where the children could keep 'their treasures'. However, mention is frequently made of it being a 'home and not a 'barracks', so homely family life was the intended aim.³⁶ Sharman stated that 'play' was also given consideration and the children had a 'good playground'.³⁷ The building would contain both living and school rooms. In the large central hall, Sharman would be able to talk to the children on Sunday afternoons. This would appear to have been in the form of a Sunday school or church meeting.

Another interesting detail told, was that Sharman's own house was next door to the orphanage and there was a gate connecting the children's garden to hers. Each year on her birthday, her biographer wrote that the gate was left open and the children allowed through. She also had a post-box on the gate in which the children could leave her little letters.³⁸

³⁴ Sixth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.7.

³⁵ Ninth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.15.

³⁶ Williams, (n.d.), p.69.

³⁷ Fourteenth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p6.

³⁸ Williams, (n.d.), p.69.

By 1876 the new building was well under way but unfortunately as it grew it cut out the light from the old Home. The work also disturbed the local wild life because it was reported that the old house became overrun by mice. When the first wing was completed the children were able to move in. The central block was finished in 1878 and six years later the South wing was ready and furnished and so the Home was complete. The building work had taken over eight years from start to finish and must have been a real disruption to the lives of all concerned. The North wing was for the girls of school age and also the older girls. The central block contained the large hall, the dining room and kitchen, offices, teachers' rooms and bathrooms. The South wing was for the infants and babies.³⁹ The building is still standing and is used by the Imperial War Museum to house one of their special collections. After it closed as an orphanage it became, for a while, a hospital.

Sharman then saw what she perceived was a gap in provision for orphaned children, and in 1879 a branch was opened in Hastings. There were some children she said who were not suitable for the West Square Home. These were children who, if their parents had lived, would have occupied a different sphere of life, and would have been given a good education.⁴⁰ There is little in the archival records written separately about this home except for two small leaflets stating they are the fourth and fifth reports from the Hastings Home. Sharman set out why she felt this home was necessary. She said she was always sad when she had to refuse entry into the home for any reason but not all children who needed care 'belonged to the class for which the Home provides'. Some were from 'the lowest and most degraded stratum of

³⁹ Eighteenth Report 1884 (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/2), p.13.

⁴⁰ Fourteenth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), pp.11-12.

society,' these were not fit to mix with 'the orphans of the respectable poor'⁴¹. These were the 'city arabs', the street children. However, she said there were refuges and institutions for these children to which she could send them. The orphans who had need of the Hastings Home were children whose fathers had been 'clergymen, doctors, bankers, merchants, officers in the army, and literary men'. Sharman justified her belief in the validity of providing such a home by saying 'It is a Christian duty not only to help but to *consider* the poor, and surely none stand in more need of consideration than those who have seen better days.'⁴² For these children she estimated that it would cost £30 a year to provide for them. This was double the cost for the children in the other homes.

Over the years as the work grew there were branches at Overcliffe, and Tunbridge Wells. The home at Tunbridge Wells was opened in 1882 and was designated the 'Country Branch of the Orphans' Home'.⁴³ Sharman cared for girls from babies through to older children. Many other homes were not able to care for very tiny babies and so she was often asked to take in more than she had room for. However she would always try to make room because as her biographer observed, babies were her especial interest.⁴⁴

From the first the medical care for the children was given free of charge by a local doctor. For the first few years Sharman was able to report that although they had had some illness there had been no deaths in the home. After the home had been opened

⁴¹ The Fifth Report from the Hastings Home (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/60), p.3.

⁴² The Fifth Report from the Hastings Home (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/60), p.4 .

⁴³ Tunbridge Wells Orphans' Home (small booklet) (LUSCA D239.J7/2/61).

⁴⁴ Williams, (n.d.), p.86.

about five years it was recorded that seven children had died during that year.

Whether or not they had given their lives to Christ was very much a concern:

In the midst of grief there has been much cause for thankfulness, chiefly that those taken were either in tender infancy or had learned to know and trust the Saviour, so that we may feel they “are ours for ever”. The first was called Home in June last year.⁴⁵

This turn of phrase was quite natural to Sharman. In her obituary in 1929 C.E.K wrote in a letter to the *Times*:

Brought up in a deeply religious Evangelical atmosphere, her simple faith in God’s fatherly love pervaded her life and actuated all her doings. On modern ears, had she not been so transparently sincere, her frequent references to religion might have jarred.⁴⁶

Of one girl who had died it was written that her ‘simple faith was very beautiful’.⁴⁷

This concern that a child should have found faith in Christ was shared by most of the child savers, and certainly by all those of the evangelical persuasion. As I have already mentioned it was one of the great concerns of evangelical Christians for their own children.

There is little information about the way the homes were staffed. In the early reports Sharman referred to ‘suitable helpers’ and spoke of ‘engaging them’. This would suppose they were not voluntary workers. She also stated that the children in the two houses could be taught by the same ‘governesses’.⁴⁸ Not until the ninth report, in 1875, are there any details of the way the home was run. Sharman said she had faith

⁴⁵ Sixth report, (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.12.

⁴⁶ *The Times* Tuesday 10th December 1929, p.18, col.c.

⁴⁷ Eighth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.8.

⁴⁸ Third Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.11.

in the staff, who were ‘thoroughly good and efficient’. Their duties were ‘arduous’ and they needed particular gifts in order to fulfil their everyday work. No nurses or domestic servants were employed because the older girls did the housework and laundry. Another system in place was that each little child had an older one who had special responsibility to look after her. This was believed to be good training for the girls for when they would go into service themselves.

Sharman said that they were overwhelmed with applications for servants from the Home, a fact she maintained demonstrated that ‘the demand for good servants in our own country is greater than the supply’. It was, she felt, necessary to train some for this purpose rather than send them abroad, even though some poor children might benefit from emigration. This was a reference to the emigration programmes of many of the other child savers and it demonstrates that she was aware of the other work that was being done. Whilst in the home the girls also received a ‘plain English education’ and they learnt to knit stockings and to mend their own clothes. ‘Fine needlework’ was taught and orders were taken for making ‘ladies underclothing, baby linen, crochet and tatting’. Sharman was a believer in individuality and was always careful not to have the children treated en masse. There was no fixed age at which a girl left to go to work. She said, ‘the welfare of each child is in this as in other respects studied *individually*.’⁴⁹

When the girls were old enough to work they were helped to find a position. Also a reward was offered to those who had kept their first position for a year and so earned a ‘good character’. The nature of the reward is not documented but the fact that in

⁴⁹ Ninth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.10.

1870 five girls have already earned it is noted.⁵⁰ These girls must have been in their teens when they entered the home and only had care for a couple of years to reach this stage by this time. If a girl stayed in her first situation for seven years she was presented with a watch.

Of those who had left to go into service during the first seven years only one had 'lost the good character with which she started'. However a note is added to state that the staff of the home had 'high hopes for her'. There was also one girl with whom they had lost touch but it was stated that the rest were all doing well. Two had married and the remainder were in good situations and 'giving satisfaction'. These details demonstrate that there was after care in place and the girls were monitored when they had left. In the years since the home had been opened Sharman stated she had to 'send one child away on account of imbecility, and one on account of insanity.' Six had been expelled because of their behaviour which it was felt was 'injurious' to the other children. This report does not exactly agree with the registers which give details of eight girls who were dismissed for bad behaviour in the first three years. Nine other children had been sent to another institution. No reason was given but perhaps it was to keep brother and sisters together. In fifty cases relatives had taken a child away.⁵¹

In order to ascertain a little about the background of the girls I have analysed details given in the register for the first three years 1867, 1868 and 1869. The details are given in just one or two words and each child has one line in the register.

⁵⁰ Fourth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.11.

⁵¹ Eighth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), pp.9-10.

- 64 were ‘fatherless’
- 65 were ‘orphans’
- 3 were ‘motherless’
- 3 had been ‘deserted’

For each child it is stated whether they were baptised before entry into the home; those had not been, were baptised by Rev. S. Martin and the date is given. There is also a very short record of what became of the girls when they left the home:

- 63 went into service
- 31 were removed by the mother
- 15 were removed by various relatives
- 2 were ‘removed’ with no other details.
- 3 went to the Muller Homes
- 1 was sent to a reformatory
- 8 were dismissed, no other details except in one case which states ‘expelled’
- 9 had died, the most common cause being consumption
- 3 had been taken to live with Charlotte Sharman, in one case it states ‘adopted’. It is known that she did adopt some of the girls to bring them up at her own expense.⁵²

Although so little information is given some observations can be made and some facts gleaned. Some mothers removed their girls at the age when they were able to earn money. Sharman did not believe that it was a good thing for children to be removed by relatives unless the mother had remarried and was then in better circumstances and able to care for the child. She wrote ‘This [removal] has not always been for the

⁵² Miss Sharman’s Homes Registers of Children admitted 1867-1913, book 1 (Barnardo’s Archive, Barking-side).

benefit of the child. Some have been seen begging, others have ended in the workhouse, most have once again become destitute.’⁵³ However the figures show that some girls were removed by their mothers after a relatively short time; one was only in care for two weeks, others for a few months. Most of these were young girls aged four, six and ten years and not old enough to work. The motive here would seem to be that either the mother regretted the loss of her child or else she was being helped by someone so that she could again care for her daughter.

When a girl started work she was then kept on the books of the home for a year in case her first placement did not prove to be suitable. If this happened another one was found for her.⁵⁴ If, however, she kept the place for seven years and had a ‘good character’ then she earned her watch. Of the sixty-three who had been taken in during the first three years and gone into service it is noted that three had received their watch. One interesting detail is that of the eight who were dismissed from the Home, one won her watch eleven years later. Some girls received an award for keeping their first place for a year, but it must have been a small recognition and it is not recorded in the registers. Although there are no further details of the future lives of the girls, Sharman wrote that many of them kept in contact with her and considered the orphanage to be their home.⁵⁵ *The Times* reported that at the age of ninety Sharman still typed ‘her own correspondence’ and a photograph was published showing her at work.⁵⁶ The picture shows three little girls standing round her and it does not take much imagination to believe she was answering letters from ‘her girls’.

⁵³ Eighth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.10.

⁵⁴ Eleventh Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), pp.10-11.

⁵⁵ Thirteenth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.7.

⁵⁶ *The Times* Friday May 12th 1922, p.14 col.c.

Sharman kept in touch with the girls after they left as much as possible and she said that many of the girls wrote to her regularly; however, she would never publish extracts from the letters because she considered 'their confidence sacred.'⁵⁷ She did nevertheless say that from what they wrote she felt that the influence of the Home and what they had been taught had stayed with them. Although she does not specify, the implication was that they had remembered their Christian teaching and were trying to live by those principles.

When Sharman died in 1929 it was reported of her that she had worked 'till the last' typing all her own letters. Through her life she had cared for more than 2700 girls and had received voluntary contributions of more than £320,000. By the time she died there were branches at Gravesend, Tunbridge Wells and Hastings as well as the homes in Southwark, all of which at the time cared for about 200 children.⁵⁸ The report of her life in the *Times* spoke of a 'loving mother' rather than the 'superintendent of a home'; of a deeply religious evangelical Christian who spoke of her faith with sincerity and she was reported to be 'loved and respected' by everyone who knew her.⁵⁹ Her biographer wrote about her care and love for the children, and of their love for her; of the fact that she lost touch with very few of the girls and how so many came back each year for the reunion.⁶⁰ Sharman was, she wrote, 'the big-hearted Mother of thousands'⁶¹ and was always called 'Mamma Sharman'.⁶² She was also respected and well known in the area where she lived. *The Times* reported an example of this:

⁵⁷ Thirteenth Report (LUSCA, D239.J7/2/1), p.7.

⁵⁸ *The Times* Friday 6th December 1929, p.16 col.b.

⁵⁹ *The Times* Tuesday 10th December 1929, p.18 col.c.

⁶⁰ Williams, (n.d.), p.48.

⁶¹ Williams, (n.d.), p.183.

⁶² Williams, (n.d.), p.69.

A policeman warned a noted ex-convict in her neighbourhood that Miss Sharman must not be molested! “Wot d’ye take me for, guv’nor? That old lady is the mother of all the pore (sic) children! No one would harm her!” he replied.⁶³

In many ways Sharman’s motives were the same as those of the other child savers. She saw destitute children and her need to save them was as great as their need to be saved. She had a strong evangelical Christian faith and it influenced all she did. She made sure all the girls were baptised and was satisfied if she knew they had found a faith themselves before they died. Nothing is written about the Christian teaching of the children except a few references and one or two mentions of meetings in the hall on Sunday afternoons. It was however obvious that the children were given the opportunity to learn about Christianity.

The girls were not cared for in small family groups but Sharman was careful that they were not in such huge numbers that individuality was forgotten. She differed from the other child savers I have studied in that she only cared for girls and she did not rescue the street children. Neither did she have an emigration policy, all her work being in London and the south of England. From the age of thirty when she fostered out two destitute children, until the age of ninety-seven when she died, she headed the organisation that cared for destitute girls. It was reported that in all she ‘rescued 2,700 girls’.⁶⁴ This was quite an achievement for someone who it was thought would not live beyond childhood. Towards the end of her life she said:

⁶³ *The Times* Tuesday 10th December 1929, p.18 col.c.

⁶⁴ *The Times* Friday 6th December 1929, p.16 col.b.

Most people who plant acorns expect oak trees, but some drop a seed into the earth without the slightest idea of into what it might grow. This was my case, for in 1862 I had no more thought of ever having a large Orphanage under my care than I had of becoming Queen of the Cannibal Islands.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Williams, (n.d.), p.39.

Chapter 10

A new life for the 'Gutter children'

Maria Rye.

Maria Susan Rye (1829–1903), the daughter of a London solicitor, was the eldest of nine children. Her father, having made a poor investment early in his career, was for the rest of his life very careful with money. As a consequence his family did not live in luxurious surroundings. One thing he did invest in was a large library which Rye believed contained 'some seven thousand books'.¹ His sons were educated at St Peter's Collegiate School but at the age of thirteen they left to work in the family law business. Much to the frustration of Maria, his daughters were not given the same opportunity. They had a governess and she resented the opportunities given to boys but denied to girls. Due in part to her access to books and also to her natural gift with words she became a prolific writer, especially on subjects close to her heart. She wrote the following extract on the subject of education:

We take a family all branches of which, up to a certain age, are treated in precisely the same manner; their privileges, duties, studies, are alike; but at a given period the boys, who, until that hour, have not evinced the slightest superiority in perception, or exhibited greater aptitude for receiving knowledge, are suddenly removed, and enter upon a course of study, which, from long experience, is well known to brace the mind, produce accuracy of judgement, and give a considerable insight into the realities of after-life; the girls, on the contrary, remain in the lowland of elementaries for some three or

¹ Marion Diamond, *Emigration and Empire: The life of Maria S. Rye*, Volume 6 of *Literature and Society in Victorian Britain* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999), p.277.

four years more, after which they are advanced into the prettiness of certain frivolities, better known under the general head of “accomplishments;” but, as nothing under the existing *regime* is accomplished, finished, or completed, we must be allowed to consider that term absurdly inappropriate.²

This statement gives a hint into the mind of Rye, her forcefulness, her ease of putting forward an argument, her feminist tendencies, as well as her concern about the lack of a more formal education for women. It also shows an underlying anger at the injustice of the system.

Rye’s family were middle class and women of this level of society did not have paid employment as a general rule. To supplement her limited resources Rye began writing for *The Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine*. This not only helped to give her a measure of independence it also gave her a platform for her views. She had made good use of her father’s library and was well read. Her special interest was history, especially as it related to women. She had been brought up within the Anglican tradition of the Christian church and her faith was evangelical in expression. In common with many women of the time from the age of sixteen Rye was involved in philanthropic work in the parish where she lived. She visited the workhouse and was appalled by what she saw, being especially concerned by the conditions in which women found themselves. With a group of like-minded friends she began a sewing circle for poor women of the parish. Here the women could learn to sew and could also obtain cloth to make clothes which they could pay for weekly. Rye was a great believer in self-help.

² Diamond, pp.5-6.

Through her articles in *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* she came to the notice of the Langham Place circle; a group of women who met for discussion and who campaigned for better rights for women. One of the problems that they felt existed was the lack of work suitable for middle class women. Many women did not receive an adequate education themselves so to be a governess, which was one of the few openings for them, was not always an option. The group felt that there were many situations which women could fill competently given proper training and which would not compromise their feminine status. They consequently formed the Society for the Promotion of Employment of Women. The aim of this society was to support any feasible experiment which would do just that. Two examples to which support was given were: a printers and publishers set up by Emily Faithfull in which she only employed women, and a combined law stationer's shop and law-copying office opened in 1860 with Rye at its head. Rye was particularly suited to this because as a young girl she had been trained by her father to copy law documents and manuscripts, which had to be done in a particular way with a certain style of writing. He was probably using her as cheap labour at the time but it gave her a skill she would otherwise not have had. Rye was a very hard taskmaster; anyone who did not come up to standard after training was immediately fired. She would only employ those who conformed to her strict evangelical ideals and Catholics were definitely not allowed. However the work was very popular and at one point she had as many as 850 applicants for one situation. Rye found this state of affairs unacceptable and searched around for a solution to the problem. Since there were more women than men in the population, marriage was not going to be the answer for many of them.

She became more and more convinced that emigration to a country with more opportunities would help the 'surplus women'³.

In 1862 William Rathbone Greg, published an article in the *National Review*, 'Why are Women Redundant'. He had analysed the figures in the 1851 and 1861 censuses and came to the conclusion that there were far more women than men in England. This imbalance could be set right, he believed, if the surplus women could be encouraged to emigrate to America, Canada and Australia. In these countries he argued the imbalance was reversed and so there was a shortage of women.⁴ The class of women he was aiming his argument at were the middle class, because he believed that working class women would always be needed as domestic servants in England. He had some hard things to say about middle class women. They had, he said, been brought up to be idle and like a life of luxury, they were stupid and most of all costly to any young man who wanted to marry. He claimed that the '*demi monde*' were 'clever and amusing, usually more beautiful, and not infrequently (in external demeanour at least) as modest'. He recommended that the '*monde*' should 'imitate that rival circle in its attractive and not in its repellent features – in its charms, not in its drawbacks, nor its blots;' In this way he believed that as wives became less expensive to keep men would begin to prefer them to mistresses.⁵ Single women should find work he argued but only in the accepted realms of feminine occupations such as charity work or as novelists. He believed that most women, who from necessity became governesses, were ill equipped educationally to do so. They would,

³ Diamond, ch.3.

⁴ William Rathbone Greg, 'Why are Women Redundant' in *The National Review* 14 April 1862, <http://digital.lib.umn.edu/cgi-bin/Ebind2html/vic_gregwhya> [accessed 9 January 2007] pp.434-460 (p.442).

⁵ Greg, p.453.

he felt, benefit from attending a college to be trained for the work.⁶ He did not agree with women occupying positions which were traditionally held by men. This was not necessarily for economic reasons but rather because 'the brain and frame' of women was more suited to work which needed 'subtlety and sensitiveness'. They did not have the 'strength and tenacity of fibre' needed for the professions or scientific work. He believed that women's minds and health would break down under the strain because their 'cerebral organisation' was more 'delicate' than man's.⁷ Celibacy was, he agreed, right for a minority of people but for the majority it was unnatural. His solution therefore was that those women, who for whatever reason did not marry, should be encouraged to emigrate to the colonies where they might find a suitable partner to marry. These bigoted comments infuriated many women, in particular those who were concerned with raising awareness of women's issues and agitating for better rights. However, having said that, both they, and Greg, had come to the same conclusion from different standpoints and for different reasons. For Greg the reason for emigration was in order that women might fulfil their natural function as wives and mothers. For Rye and her associates it was in order they could find employment, become independent and escape from genteel poverty in England.

The Female Middle Class Emigration Society was formed with Rye as its secretary and she began to look into the feasibility of transporting women such long distances. She realised that a woman could easily lose her character whilst on board ship and so she proposed that a chaperone be employed on all ships carrying emigrants to care for them. However it soon came to light that there were not as many openings for middle class women as had been thought and so Rye became involved in the work of

⁶ Greg, p.458.

⁷ Greg, pp.455-456.

emigration for women of all classes. She recognized that there would be a call for domestic servants in the colonies as well as jobs for more educated women.

Eventually she decided to go to New Zealand and Australia and see for herself what the conditions were like and what was in fact needed. She also wanted to make contact with influential people there and obtain promises of acceptance for the women. On 2nd November 1862 she set sail for New Zealand where she spent two years travelling around. From there she went to Australia and spent a further sixteen months before arriving back in England on May 1866. Once back in England Rye found that although she was able speak with authority about conditions in the colonies, two of the main platforms for the expression of her views had disappeared. The Langham Place Circle had disbanded and the *English Woman's Journal* had ceased publication.

Whilst in Australia Rye had made an agreement with the Governor of Victoria enabling her to send out 150 women and ten families each month. For these she was to be allowed travelling expenses, an office in London and an assistant. The office was subsequently opened from where she began her work of recruiting young women from the slums and the workhouses. In order to do this she travelled around the country and was sometimes over-enthusiastic in her persuasive techniques. For example two girls from the Manchester workhouse put their names down to go in the belief that 'they should be able to pick up lumps of gold in the fields'. When they were disabused of this illusion they decided not to go.⁸ Towards the end of 1867, less than two years after beginning the scheme, no more Australian money was available to pay for women to emigrate to that country. After this, Rye turned her attention to

⁸ Diamond, p.169.

Canada, which she visited in 1868 with the intention of investigating the opportunities for women in that country. Even though she was often at loggerheads with other emigration agents in England she continued with her work. Many of them resented her involvement in this field, which was considered to be a man's sphere. However by this time there was less money available for the project. There were also dissenting voices both at home and in the colonies as to the character of some of the women.

Rye still believed in emigration as a solution to the 'surplus women' problem, and she began to think that it would serve the same purpose to take girls before they became adults. This would dispel the criticism that women were only going out to find husbands. Also these children could be classed as sexually innocent and therefore no threat to the society in which they were to live. Her experience of emigration by this time was considerable, but this was to be a new departure because the children were going to need a different kind of care to that needed by adult women. On the other hand, unlike the women many of the children had very little say in their future. What Rye was in fact proposing was the wholesale emigration of English pauper children. She believed that this was for the benefit of both countries. She wrote in a letter to *The Times*, 'at home – we are so overtaxed, over-burdened, over-populated' that many people would find it hard to imagine a country where the population was small in comparison to the size of the country. She also believed that the country which would receive the children would benefit from their labour.⁹

After many years of helping the 'surplus women' to emigrate, it seemed natural to Rye to transfer her expertise to girls rather than boys. She said that there were already

⁹ *The Times* 29th March 1869, p.8 col.f.

a number of agencies helping boys and they could also enrol with the army or navy.¹⁰

In a further letter she asked the question:

But what are we doing for the girls? ... Our gutter children – and there are over 100,000 of them about our streets this day, - grow up in habits of enforced idleness, until at last we have the outcast, listless vagabond woman, who has no past or present and as far as this life is concerned, no possible future.¹¹

What Rye does not mention here is that the majority of the children that she took to Canada were pauper girls from the workhouses. However, the street children were a much more poignant subject to the people she was hoping to receive donations from. Rye stated that she would need at least £1000 to get the scheme off the ground. If she was able to raise the money she said she would open two small homes, one in England to shelter the children until they were emigrated and one in Canada where they could live until they were placed out with a Canadian family. Rye also stated that she would make sure that the children were placed where they would be ‘under or within the influence of clergymen of our National Church, or evangelical ministers of other denominations’.¹²

Rye was initially influenced by the work of Mr Van Meter in America who, after the American civil war, took the ‘city Arabs of New York (the *debris* of that terrible struggle)’¹³ out of the city and settled them in the west of America. She believed that if it was a good thing for the children of New York it would also be beneficial for the

¹⁰ *The Times* 29th March 1869, p.8 col.f.

¹¹ *The Times* 20th April 1869, p.12 col.e.

¹² *The Times* 29th March 1869, p.8 col.f.

¹³ *The Times* 29th March 1869, p.8 col.f.

‘gutter children’¹⁴ of England. She forestalled the questions that might be asked about what assurances could be given as to the treatment of the children in a foreign land by saying:

What treatment will they receive from the cold, the starvation, the temptation they meet with in our gutters; what justice will they receive at our hands when the police, the gaol, the hospital, the Magdalen receive them?¹⁵

After the initial letter, published at the end of March, Rye wrote many times giving a list of donations received and answering comments and questions raised. In answer to a question about the amount of supervision in place for the after care of the children, she gave a somewhat vague reply; ‘local committees of ladies and gentlemen in the different towns can easily be formed, who from time to time – say quarterly – report of the children living in their own immediate neighbourhoods;’¹⁶ Considering the children were to be settled over a wide area of the country this would seem to be a rather weak unformed idea. A question was asked about the ‘gutter children’ of Canada – did they not have any of their own? Rye rather dismissed this saying that she was aware that in all large towns deserted children could be found. Those who were orphaned, she said, were cared for; but the children of the streets ‘are the children of drunken, worthless vagabonds, who will neither provide for the poor little things themselves nor allow anyone else to do so for them.’¹⁷ This seems to be a wide sweeping generalisation. To the question of whether she had had contact with the Canadian Government she replied ‘I have not’. However she went on to say that instead she had been in contact with ‘Messrs Allan Brothers, of the Montreal Steam

¹⁴ *The Times* 29th March 1869, p.8 col.f.

¹⁵ *The Times* 29th March 1869, p.8 col.f.

¹⁶ *The Times* 12th April 1869, p.11 col.c.

¹⁷ *The Times* 3th June 1869, p.6 col.e.

Company' and she was assured that as long as she had sufficient money to fund herself no questions would be asked.¹⁸ When asked whether the home in England would be used as a permanent place for girls who were not to be emigrated she was very much in favour of the idea and gave it the name 'Home of Hope'. To carry out this idea she said she would 'require quite another £1,000'.¹⁹ However it seems the dream did not materialise in this way. It was three more years before the English home was opened and the girls who were not to emigrate were usually returned to their own family or placed in another orphanage.

In August 1869 Rye travelled to Canada to make arrangements with officials. She needed to persuade them that her scheme was feasible, and to get agreement from them that would allow her to bring the children to Canada. She did not need to ask for finance because she already had the promise of enough money to begin the project. Whilst she was there she found a suitable house to convert into a reception home for the children. Here they could be looked after until suitable placements could be found for them. On the edge of the town, Niagara-on-the-lake, she saw what had originally been the old gaol and courthouse and although it needed a lot of alterations she bought it and named it 'Our Western Home'. On the first floor the cells were taken out and the space converted into large rooms. From the large hall in the centre, a dining room, a reception room for visitors and several other rooms were accessed. The children, she said, would use the hall during the daytime for their work and lessons. Upstairs the courtroom was converted into a large dormitory. Rye had her room on this floor also, and along with other rooms there was the bathroom and

¹⁸ *The Times* 3rd June 1869, p.6 col.e.

¹⁹ *The Times* 20th April 1869, p.12 col.e.

washroom for the children.²⁰ Between 1869 and when she retired in 1896 Rye travelled between England and Canada taking with her about 4000 children in all.

Rye made arrangements for the arrival of the children who were initially to stay at Our Western Home. When people applied for a child they had to provide references and give assurance as to the way the child would be treated. They were asked to provide details of their marital status, number of own children, trade or profession and how long they had lived in their present home. Enquiries were made as to which Church they belonged to, what position the child would hold within the family and what age of child they would prefer. On one completed form which has survived, the last two questions were answered with this information: the girl would be a 'servant' but they would 'use her kind and same as our own'. They also gave their preference for a girl 'not younger than 13 or 14 years'.²¹ It was expected that the children would be allowed access to schooling until they were thirteen. For boys this was often practical during the winter when work outside on the farm was not always possible, but for girls there would be no such natural break, the work of the house would continue all through the year. Therefore it had to be a conscious decision to allow a girl to go to school and not just something that could be fitted in when there was a slack period. Assurance that a child would be encouraged to attend Church and Sunday school was also asked for. Anyone applying for a child was asked to supply names of suitable people who could provide a reference. Rye also had a form to be used in order to take up these references; however none of the completed forms would appear to have been preserved.

²⁰ *The Times* 28th December 1869, p.4 col.d.

²¹ Application form, (University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives, D801/2) [hereafter to be referred to as LUSCA].

Andrew Doyle, a Local Government Inspector, was sent to Canada in 1874 to report on the emigration schemes. Doyle, who was a Roman Catholic, was a lawyer and at the age of sixty-five, had been a Poor Law inspector since 1948.²² His report will be discussed later in more detail, but some facts are relevant at this point. He said he had found that in the majority of cases children were taken in 'on account of their future usefulness'.²³ One farmer had expressed the opinion to him that it was as easy 'to feed a child as a chicken'.²⁴ He said that in the majority of cases he had seen the children were usually treated kindly although they were expected to work from an early age, which was also a common factor with the Canadian children. Some children were adopted and whilst this could be a good opportunity, for others it meant that they were working for nothing. He stated that although he had seen some cases of what he called 'real adoption' where the child was brought up as a daughter of the family with all the privileges that entailed, this only applied in a small percentage of cases.²⁵ Of these cases he spoke with unqualified approval. He said he had visited several children who had been adopted and that 'without exception their condition in all respects [was] most satisfactory'.²⁶ However others would not have the status of children of the family who would expect to receive an inheritance, neither were they servants who would be paid. One girl cynically put it 'Doption, sir, is when folks gets a girl to work without wages.'²⁷

Rye had three forms which were used for the placement of children, 'Indenture of adoption', 'Indenture of service' and 'Indenture of apprenticeship'. When a child was

²² Diamond, p.243.

²³ Andrew Doyle, 'Emigration of Pauper children to Canada' Report to the Local Government Board (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1875), p.12.

²⁴ Doyle 1875, p.12.

²⁵ Doyle 1875, p.11.

²⁶ Doyle 1875, p.30.

²⁷ Doyle 1875, p.12.

placed out under the 'adoption' scheme the receiving family had to sign to bring her up as their own, to allow her to be educated and brought up in the Protestant faith. If the terms of the agreement were broken the child would be removed. There is no mention of payment or of the work to be undertaken by the child.²⁸ The 'service' and 'apprenticeship' schemes would appear to be very similar. The first applied to girls and the second to boys. The majority of children taken to Canada by Rye were girls so it is to be assumed that the first form would be most in use. The receiving family had to sign that they would allow the child to be educated and encouraged to attend Church and Sunday school. Girls must be taught all household duties as well as sewing in order that they would be able to earn their own living when they came to the end of their service agreement. Likewise boys must be trained in the trade of the family where they were settled. Wages were also agreed. Up to the age of fifteen a girl worked for her board and clothing after which a sum of money was agreed to be paid as wages. Boys were to work for board and clothing until they were thirteen after which until the boy reached the age of eighteen, the rates of 'thirty dollars, forty dollars, fifty dollars, sixty dollars, and eighty dollars per year' were to be paid.²⁹ For example an indenture paper which has survived gave these details of a thirteen year old girl who was to be employed. The employer signed that he would feed, clothe and educate her; that he would 'use his authority to induce her to attend some Sunday School and place of public worship, where the doctrines of Christianity, as held by the Protestant denominations, are taught;' and that he agreed, when the girl reached the age of fifteen, to pay the wages of three dollars a month instead of clothing. In return the girl promised to be a good servant and 'obey all his reasonable demands.' Maria

²⁸ Doyle 1875, pp.38-39.

²⁹ Doyle 1875, pp.39-41.

Rye and a colleague signed the paper, as did the employer after which the girl made her mark. It was a cross.³⁰

Many of the children were unable to read and so they had no idea how much of their life they were signing away. One wonders whether all the implications were explained in detail to this child and whether she was given any choice. Doyle reported that there were very many cases where the indenture papers were not signed and in any case he felt they did not provide any security either to the child or to the employer. This would only be the case if there was an efficient method of making sure the conditions were fulfilled on both sides. Rye had all the administrative forms in place but indications are that they were not followed through effectively. The pauper girls who were to be emigrated were no doubt told of the wonderful life that awaited them, but they could have had no concept of the reality of what was involved. Nevertheless with her belief in the problem of the 'surplus women', Rye's motive in this was always to do what she believed was the best for the child's future.

In the beginning she negotiated from the workhouse authorities a fee of £8 towards the transport cost and care of each child who was to emigrate. This must, however, have seemed a good arrangement to the workhouse guardians because they were being relieved of the cost of keeping the children until they were old enough to become independent.³¹ In June 1869 Rye left for Canada taking three children, two girls and a baby boy of four months. On arrival in Canada the girls were adopted. However the baby died only nine months later.³²

³⁰ Indenture agreement form (LUSCA D801/1).

³¹ 'Miss Rye's Scheme of Female Emigration' by Workhouse Guardians (LUSCA D630/2/1).

³² 'First Report of the placing out of pauper and other orphans in Canada and the United States of America' (LUSCA D630/2/2).

In October 1869 Rye took the first large group of seventy-four children, which was made up of six boys and sixty-seven girls. The boys were between five and seventeen years old and the girls between four and thirteen. Fifty-three of the girls were orphans, eleven had been deserted, one had a mother in the workhouse and two had only a father, who was said to be more in prison than out of it. Sixteen of the girls were adopted, fifty were 'bound over for service' and the remaining one went to live with her married sister in America. One interesting fact becomes clear however, these were not the 'city arabs' or 'gutter children' that Rye appealed for in her letter to *The Times* when she was asking for funds. Of the sixty-seven girls, forty-nine were from the Liverpool workhouse, seven from other workhouses and orphanages, eight from various relatives, and only two from a London refuge and one from a ragged school.³³

The departure of the children was reported in an article in *The Times* entitled 'Little Emigrants'. The reporter described the arrival of the party as they boarded the ship. They were, he wrote, all warmly clothed in 'woollen hoods, covering the ears and shoulders, substantial woollen frocks and cloaks, stout shoes, and woollen socks'. They were each given a 'nice picture book and a plum bun.' The berths on board were said to be roomy and a section of the ship had been partitioned off to reserve it for the emigration party. He said there were no tears from any of the children, except from 'one pretty little maiden who had run a splinter in her finger'. Apart from this everyone was 'cheerful, merry, [and] happy-looking'. The reporter was obviously in favour of the scheme because the account was written in a positive vein.³⁴ The article also stated that Rye, with twenty-five children from London, Wolverhampton and Bath, was already on board when the girls from the Liverpool workhouse joined them.

³³ 'First Report of the Placing out of pauper and other orphans in Canada and the United States of America' (LUSCA D630/2/2).

³⁴ *The Times* 29th October 1869, p.10 col.d.

Here the two sets of figures do not exactly add up. In her annual report Rye's figures show that only eighteen children were from sources other than the Liverpool workhouse and not the twenty-five reported by *The Times*. Another fact which emerges is that Rye did not know the majority of the girls who joined her. She was not able to personally vouch for their characters; nor could she know them well enough to be able to give an account of their temperament to prospective employers or adoptive parents.

When the children were placed in situations care was not taken to make sure that sisters were kept together or at least near enough for them to keep in touch. In some cases a girl might be adopted whilst her sister was put into service. For example a seven year old girl was adopted and her eleven year old sister was 'bound for service'. Although the placements were both in Ontario they could have been many miles apart or even separated by the lake.³⁵ Another case was that of three sisters, aged fourteen, eleven and nine who were all put with farmers, one in Port Quebec and two in Ontario. The eldest and youngest were to live 'as one of the family' and the middle one was 'bound for service'.³⁶ A sad case was that of twin girls aged eleven. They were separated, going to different areas of Ontario. One of the girls was adopted and the other 'bound for service'.³⁷ Although there were some instances of sisters being kept together, in the vast majority of cases they were separated on arrival.

There were consequently many heartbroken letters asking for news of a brother or sister. Whether it was thought that the children were too young or too poor to form strong attachments to existing members of their family is not known. What is clear is

³⁵ Annual Report 1872 & 1873 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.8.

³⁶ Annual Report 1885 (LUSCA D630/1/9), p.21.

³⁷ Annual Report 1872 & 1873 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.11.

that their feelings do not seem to have been taken into account. It is also highly likely that many employers were reluctant to take more than one child. One girl wrote to say her sisters both had good homes and she was obviously able to keep in touch with them. However she had written to her family in England and had not had a reply. This made her 'lonesome' and she had begun to think 'there must be something the matter with them'.³⁸ In another case the host family wrote to say that 'our little girl ... is very desirous of knowing where and with whom her elder sister is'.³⁹ This sounds like another child who desperately missed her own family even though she would appear to have been sensitively cared for. A number of the letters written were to the matron of a workhouse. One example gave some interesting clues about the thoughts of the child. In the letter of August 1870 she wrote that they had a safe crossing, more than enough to eat, 'plum-pudding and roast meat and potatoes and bread.' She then sent her love to her brother and asked that they 'recommend [him] to Miss Rye' in the hope that he could come to Canada as well. She said she had a good mistress and she sent her love to various people at the workhouse. The letter ended 'I hope the next letter will be a little better. I was a shame [sic] to send this paper, only I remembered it would be a waste of paper.'⁴⁰ Although the girl said she had a very good home, she obviously missed the people she left behind in England, and remembered some of the things she had been taught.

Often when a child was adopted their name was changed. This caused a problem in later years when trying to trace a family member. An example of this comes from a letter written in April 1880 the girl ended it by saying 'My name was C.G. before I

³⁸ Annual Report 1880 (LUSCA D630/1/4), p.15.

³⁹ 'What the people say about the children' (LUSCA D630/2/5), p.25.

⁴⁰ 'What the children say about Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/5), p.35.

came here but now they have changed it to P.’⁴¹ Reading between the lines, it does not sound as if the girl had any choice in the matter, but at least she could remember her own name. With a very young child, if they had forgotten their own surname, this could add to their sense of dislocation in later life. It could also make it difficult for another member of her family to trace her.

Most of the copied letters which have been preserved are from grateful children and employers and as such give a good impression of the system that brought them to Canada. Some of the letters from employers express their satisfaction and ask to be able to take another child. One such request asking for a second girl was ‘I hope you will pick out a nice bright girl for me, and I will be a mother to her.’⁴² However another employer was not so happy, the letter says she ‘is not pleased with the girl that you sent her. She wants a large one. She wants to know if you would not change her when you get some large ones.’⁴³ This shows a total disregard for the child’s feelings; she was only an object, someone to do the work, no different really than a mop and bucket which was the wrong size for the purpose.

In 1872 Rye acquired a house in Peckham, which she said was opened by the donation of £1500 given by two friends. In the report published in 1874 Rye gave the reason why this was a necessity. Her office in the city was so cluttered with all the necessary paperwork that there was ‘no corner’ in which she could ‘shelter an extra sad case, no matter how terrible the story, or how young and helpless the sufferer.’⁴⁴

Again her emotive use of language is in evidence. A committee of Trustees was

⁴¹ Annual Report 1880 (LUSCA D630/1/4), p.15.

⁴² ‘What the people say about the children’ (LUSCA D630/2/5), p.9.

⁴³ ‘What the people say about the children’ (LUSCA D630/2/5), p.18.

⁴⁴ Annual Report 1874 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.4.

formed to administer the home, which was primarily to be used as a sheltering place for girls who were to emigrate to Canada. From details in the report it would seem that this home was not intended to be somewhere that a child could remain for a long period. If emigration was not the answer then the child was either returned to her family or placed in an orphanage. Rye herself was more involved in the Canadian side of the project and her sister Bessie and close friend and secretary Lizzie Still ran the sheltering home in England. In the Annual Report of 1878 Rye referred to the house at Peckham as the 'receiving Home' and the one in Canada as the 'distributing Home.'⁴⁵ These names do not give the impression of a safe secure home; there is something very transient about them. Rye detailed the cost of taking a destitute child to Canada and put it at '£15 per head.'⁴⁶ The children had to be cared for in the home at Peckham and clothed and fed until such time as a party was ready to emigrate. The workhouse children usually joined the party at the docks. This is the reason why Rye puts the cost at £15 when the Workhouse guardians only gave £8 for the transport of their children.

The report of 1874 ended with an appeal, not only for money but also for children. Rye wrote, 'I hope to start for Canada in the spring with another party of children, and am in England again at this season for the express purpose of refilling this Home, and of replenishing our purses.' She went on to say that she was 'employing two Bible women' who were to bring any children they could find from 'railway arches, the mud-banks of the Thames, and tramp-wards of the workhouses.' Other people were also encouraged to bring 'stray cases' of girls between five and twelve years of age.

⁴⁵ Annual Report 1878 (LUSCA D630/1/2), p.17.

⁴⁶ Annual Report 1874 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.4.

Everyone was then asked to give donations of children's clothing as well as money.⁴⁷

This method of appeal totally takes away the individuality of the children. They become just another commodity.

Unfortunately details of the regime within the home have not survived. However in the report of 1880 Rye gave some details of the daily routine. During the morning, she wrote, the elder girls learn the various household tasks, washing and cleaning whilst the younger ones were given basic lessons. This seems to have been mainly Bible teaching and learning about 'personal cleanliness, truthfulness and obedience.' In the afternoon they were all taught needlework. Saturday was kept as a holiday.⁴⁸

In 1874 the sheltering home had been opened for eighteen months and in that time 127 girls had been received. Fourteen of these were either returned to families or proved unsuitable for emigration, the rest were all taken and settled in Canada. The ages of the girls ranged from one year old to sixteen. Rye put a note on the report to say that the 'Average age of these children thus taken from misery, and on the high road to destruction – ten years ten months'.⁴⁹ An analysis produces the following details of the 127 girls:

- 29 were orphans,
- 17 had been deserted by one or both parents,
- 28 had parents who were drunkards or of bad character,
- 23 had been living with one parent in extreme poverty,
- 9 had one parent who was ill,

⁴⁷ Annual Report 1874 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.6.

⁴⁸ Annual Report 1880 (LUSCA D630/1/4), p.11.

⁴⁹ Annual Report 1874 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.13.

- 4 had only a father who worked away from home,
- 5 had a father who was very old,
- 4 had been badly treated by a step-parent,
- 5 were going to relatives already in Canada or America,
- 3 had a father in prison.

It would appear from this that all the girls had a very real and pressing need to be cared for, either because they were orphaned or their living conditions were unacceptable. Many of these were the gutter children of which Rye so eloquently wrote. One example given is of a girl who woke one morning to find that her father had taken the rest of the family away leaving her alone without food or money. She had lived on the streets, begging, for three months before she was taken in by Rye.

Although the majority of these girls emigrated to Canada, some did not; eleven were reclaimed by their relatives. In two cases the child was persuaded not to go to Canada; one by her sister and the other by her aunt. One report of a seven year old states: 'Mother dead; father left with eight children; a worthless bad man, just been in prison, refused to give consent for child to emigrate; we ultimately placed her in a friend's orphanage in London.'⁵⁰ Even though many people lived in utmost poverty, the fear of losing contact with a child sometimes led them to say no to emigration. What appears to have been forgotten in the effort to save children from destitution was family love. Another more mundane reason however, was that a child could earn money on reaching the age of twelve and so at that age they became a necessary contributor to the family budget. Some parents were quite happy for the various

⁵⁰ Annual Report 1874 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.10 .

agencies to take the burden of care from their shoulders until then but wanted the child back when they became useful.

When the girls arrived in Canada, they were settled in various situations. Using as an example the girls detailed above, the following facts emerge. Forty-nine were 'bound for service' as housemaids, forty-six were adopted and the rest joined relatives already in Canada, or remained at Our Western Home temporarily. The first placement was not always suitable and some girls moved from one employer to another. No details were given as to the reason, except in one case where the girl, who was aged fourteen, moved three times. It is written of her that she was a 'violent and disobedient girl' and that her mother also had a 'very violent temper'. It was not only the young children who were recorded as 'adopted', the ages for this category ranged from one year to fourteen. Similarly girls as young as nine years were recorded as 'bound'. Of the 127 girls only four are mentioned as being dismissed from the home. Two were removed from the home in Peckham for dishonesty, one for 'indecent behaviour' and one girl was reported to be in prison in Canada for having 'committed a very extensive robbery'.⁵¹ How many of the girls made a success of their life in Canada is not easy to establish. The source material for the facts noted comes from the annual reports written by Rye. There is obviously some danger in relying on this entirely because the information is biased to show the positive side of the scheme. The reports were for publicity purposes, people would want to know that their money was well spent. Many of the letters published were consequently from happy well-settled people. There has therefore been a greater survival rate for the positive elements of evidence.

⁵¹ Annual Report 1874 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.11.

In the 1880 report Rye gave details of the children who had been admitted to the Home in Peckham and of the 101 names two did not go to Canada. Again, quite high percentages were noted as being adopted. Rye had two different designations, 'as one of the family' and 'service but to sit at table'.⁵² The first was what is generally believed to be adoption; but the second was to work for, but to live and eat with, the family. The above details are just a small sample of the way in which the children who were taken to Canada were settled in families or found employment.

Supervision of such a large number of placements would have been a time-consuming task. There is no indication that each host family or their place was inspected and the child's temperament considered in making the placement. In fact Rye did not have time to assess each child before they were put into a situation because they were all placed out as soon as possible after arriving. In a letter dated 1893 Rye detailed some of her arrangements to J.J. Kelso who had written to her regarding her work. Further details of this correspondence will be dealt with later in this chapter. Rye stated that she asked for references from the host family and expected them to pay the rail fare for the child. She then said that she always sent a 'matron' with them 'till they get their last train'.⁵³ From this it would appear that the child was left to arrive at their destination alone. When Rye appealed for money for the emigration scheme she stressed that the children would be supervised; this would have been impossible for her to do in person. The children were settled over a wide area and a large staff would have been needed and more resources than were available to visit them all. She therefore often relied on the children writing when they had a problem. This was not a very practical solution because many of them could barely read and write. They

⁵² Annual Report 1880 (LUSCA D630/1/4), pp.19-21.

⁵³ Correspondence with Kelso (LUSCA D630/4/3)

would have had to ask for assistance from their employers as well as asking for paper and stamps. The employer would hardly be expected to assist a child in writing to complain about them.

Rye had many letters published in the *Times*, this being one of the ways in which she promoted her work. She was very good at tapping into the public interest, and because of her command of language knew exactly how to tug at the public heartstrings. In one such letter she began by thanking a number of people for their gifts of money and then went on to describe the condition in which the children had been found, 'bruised, sometimes burnt, generally half-starved, and always in rags and filth.' She often copied letters from satisfied employers and also those sent by children, making sure to use the ones which were most emotive. In this instance one letter was from a young girl saying how happy she was. The people were good to her giving her nice clothes and plenty of food. She said she was now 'as fat as a pig' and had got 'red cheeks and too [sic] chins'. It was a letter to her impoverished aunts in England who had cared for her. She sent her 'respects' to them and said how sorry she was that she had been a naughty girl whilst with them and she asked them to forgive her. The letter enumerated all the good things that Canada had to offer a destitute child and would make anyone who was considering a donation determined to give another child the same chance. The ending to the letter would seem perfectly natural at the time, showing that the girl was aware of her good fortune, and that naughtiness went with poverty. However it implicitly gives out the message that the girl also thought that the separation from her family was a punishment for being naughty. The second letter was from a host family who had adopted a little girl. She had lived with them for four years and was a 'good little girl' who had 'grown quite

pretty and lady-like'. Although she was not very clever at her lessons she was 'naturally musical'. The letter ended 'may everyone to whom you have given a little girl be as satisfied and grateful as we are.' Rye made the point that this little girl was a 'poor little workhouse orphan, remarkable neither for beauty of person nor brightness of mind'. This makes the remarks in the letter all the more emotive, albeit not very complimentary to the child. Rye ended her letter with these words 'if any of you know of any deserted, ill-treated, half-starved little girl under 13 years of age, and will send her here, I am ready to receive her'.⁵⁴ The way the letter is put together is a very clever piece of publicity and would certainly help Rye to continue with her work.

Although Rye often referred to the children as orphans, as has been demonstrated this was not necessarily so. Many were daughters of lone mothers whose husbands had either died or deserted them and who then could not earn enough to keep the family together. Sometimes when a woman remarried her new husband refused to take on the daughter as well. There were also those who were illegitimate and whose mother was not able to provide for them. The children were not encouraged to keep contact with their English families. Rye was judgemental in her attitude to parents whom she considered feckless. Marion Diamond states that the Children's Society still holds in their archive some letters, which parents sent, but on which was written 'not to be forwarded to the children'.⁵⁵ Unfortunately on investigation these letters would seem to be no longer available. The fact that they did exist reinforces the impression that many families were right when they feared that they would lose contact with their child. In company with many others of the era Rye appears to have been a believer in the value of nurture over nature. If these children could be taken away from immoral

⁵⁴ *The Times* 6th March 1874, p.4 col.f.

⁵⁵ Diamond, p.231.

and criminal influences then they would forget their past and learn to live honest and moral lives. She also believed in the clean, pure air of the countryside as opposed to the evil, unclean atmosphere of the city.

In 1874 allegations were made against Rye in particular about the regime at Our Western Home. The person responsible for this was the husband of a former employee who had been dismissed by Rye for being deceitful and untruthful. However, because the allegations were put before the board of Governors of one of the Workhouses who had been involved in sending children, they had at least to be investigated. The allegations made were of cruelty to the children whilst in the home; of neglect of duty by not thoroughly investigating potential employers of the children; and of punishing those who were sent back to the home for whatever reason by putting them on a diet of bread and water. Rye's finances were also questioned, the implication being that she was profiting by the scheme. The proposition was put forward that the children would be better off remaining in England and work being found for them in their own country.⁵⁶ Rye denied all the allegations and although the Board of Guardians eventually believed her, the controversy reared its head from time to time and refused to go away entirely.

Maybe because of these allegations, or maybe because of other feelings of unease about the large number of children who were being transported from their home country to Canada, it was decided that an investigation needed to be carried out. In 1874 Andrew Doyle a Local Government Inspector, was appointed to go to Canada to investigate all the schemes in operation, for emigrating pauper children. He remained

⁵⁶ Diamond, p.240.

in Canada for three months during which time he made as thorough an inspection as he was able in the time available. He then produced a detailed report, which was published in 1875. The report was addressed to 'The Right Honourable The President of the Local Government Board'. At the beginning he set out his sphere of activity:

In this Report I propose to refer to the system of emigration originally conducted by Miss Macpherson and Miss Rye; then to state

The circumstances under which pauper children came to be included in it
The mode in which children of both classes are collected and sent out to Canada;

The arrangements for their conveyance from England to their destination and for their subsequent reception in the Dominion;

The mode of placing them out in service;

The conditions under which they are so placed;

The nature of the service and character of the Homes in which the children are placed;

The character and extent of the supervision subsequently exercised over them;

I shall then, in conclusion, take leave to call your attention to what appear to me to be defects in the detailed arrangements of this scheme of emigration, and to submit to you such general remarks as occur to me upon the system generally and upon the results of it, so far as they may be judged of from an experience that as yet covers a period of barely four years.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Doyle 1875, p.3.

In the report Doyle stated that he had corresponded with 'several employers', visited schools, and also visited children and their employers. These he said were 'people of all classes'. Collecting the information he found very demanding because many records were incomplete, and to visit the children meant journeys of forty and fifty miles a day 'through a rough country'.⁵⁸ Not only were the distances very great he found that access to many of the farmhouses was difficult and addresses given were not always correct. However he felt that he had managed to collect enough information to produce an unbiased report. He had visited the distributing homes and about 400 of the children in their places of employment. He was critical of all the emigration projects but he was especially critical of those run by Maria Rye and Annie Macpherson. In this section I will deal only with the report as it applied to Rye.

To begin his investigation Doyle went to Liverpool to spend a day with a party of children that Rye was accompanying in June 1874. He checked the accommodation and arrangements made for them on board the ship. There were about 150 children in the party and two thirds of them were from various workhouses. On board ship the children were under the care of one matron who usually accompanied all the children sent by Rye. No mention is made of other helpers so it is to be assumed that the children were expected to care for themselves to a great extent. Discipline too would have to be very strict to control so many children. Doyle was of the opinion that parties of no more than fifty would be much more manageable, both on the journey and when placing them out. He stated that all the children except one looked healthy and were well dressed. The child who was ill was left in England and was found to

⁵⁸ Doyle 1875, p.3.

have measles, which unfortunately had spread to eight more children who were ill by the time they arrived in Canada. Doyle himself did not leave England until three weeks later. On arrival in Canada he made enquiries about the reception of the children and the method of taking them to their destinations. He was told that unfortunately, due to a lack of adequate care on the journey, a lot of the children arrived in a 'filthy condition'. Many had been sea sick and unable to take care of themselves. Doyle proposed that there should be far more women helpers on board ship, each responsible for a certain number of children. One matron he said, no matter how 'kind and intelligent', was just not enough.⁵⁹

At this time he estimated that Rye had placed out 800 pauper children and that her proportion of 'arab' children was smaller than others who were involved in the emigration schemes. He visited both classes of children because he said that no distinction was made between them in Canada. They were all referred to as 'Miss Rye's children'.⁶⁰ One of his first criticisms related to the giving of permission in order that a child might be emigrated. He stated that pauper children were asked to give their permission before two magistrates, but this was not the case with 'street' children. If they had a legal guardian, authority from them should always be obtained. However Doyle said this was 'done in a very loose and informal way'.⁶¹ He stated that many children who were designated 'orphans' actually had one and sometimes two parents living. Rye did have forms that a widowed mother or relative might sign to give permission, an example of which was reproduced in the Report and is copied below:

⁵⁹ Doyle 1875, pp.16-17.

⁶⁰ Doyle 1875, p.4.

⁶¹ Doyle 1875, p.7.

Form of Consent required by Miss Rye of a Parent before taking out a Child.

I _____, aged _____ years, now living at _____
do declare that I am left a widow with _____ children, and that I am not able to
provide for the said children, and I now, by the advice of _____, and with
her (or his) full knowledge, give up my child _____ to Maria S. Rye, of Avenue
House, High Street, Peckham, to be brought up by that lady in the knowledge
and fear of God, her Saviour, and of her duty to her neighbour and to herself;
and I give my full permission for _____, my child to be taken to Canada,
America.

.....*Signed*

.....*Witnessed*⁶²

Completed copies of these forms have not survived so how much use was made of them is difficult to ascertain. Neither is there any mention of them in the annual reports. The language and format are very legalistic; and this would make it difficult for anyone with a limited reading ability to take in the full implication of what they were signing.

Doyle gave a good report of 'Our Western Home'. It was he said, 'in a healthy position' and was a 'very cheerful residence'. He also found it to be 'scrupulously clean' and 'in good order' when he visited.⁶³ However it must be said that his visit was expected. He reported that in all but two cases, when questioned about the diet, he was told it was 'good and sufficient'.⁶⁴ One of his criticisms was that although there was sleeping accommodation for 120 girls, the washing facilities fell short of those required for an English workhouse. He also thought it was not appropriate that

⁶² Doyle 1875, p.37.

⁶³ Doyle 1875, p.8.

⁶⁴ Doyle 1875, p.9.

girls who were returned from their placement for whatever reason should be accommodated in the same house. He felt that separate housing should be provided for them because their influence on the girls who had newly arrived could be detrimental. He also said there should be training available in order to put right whatever fault had caused them to be returned. Although the distributing home was intended to be a place of refuge for any child and they were told to regard it as 'home', Doyle found evidence that many dreaded being sent back. Some employers had told him that if a child misbehaved the worst threat they could make was 'to send her back to the home'.⁶⁵ One girl had reported that her punishment for being sent back because of a bad temper was to be put in an upstairs room in solitary confinement and fed on bread and water for eleven days. Verifying the truth of this and other statements would be difficult, and so Doyle suggested that Rye had an 'Offences and Punishments Book' which would protect her against any untrue story being spread about conditions in Our Western Home. He also proposed that all the homes should be subject to regular inspections.⁶⁶

Rye had only one distributing home at Niagara but she placed her children out over a very wide area. Doyle admitted that on paper, the precautions that Rye took to make sure the children were being placed in a suitable home, were very careful. He does not say how well they were carried out in practice. He also gave details of her procedure for placing children in distant areas. She made use of the services of friends who voluntarily agreed to place children in their area. This procedure was open to many pitfalls but Doyle praised one particular couple who he said 'admirably

⁶⁵ Doyle 1875, p.17.

⁶⁶ Doyle 1875, p.18.

discharged' their duties.⁶⁷ He visited about a third of the children in this area before giving the report. One of the main criticisms in the report was concerned with the lack of inspection of prospective employers and the homes to which the children would be going. Doyle said the children should be allowed more time in the distributing home in order that the staff could get to know them. They could then assess their character and accordingly settle them in a home where they were compatible with their employer. He found that too many of the children were moved from place to place instead of having a settled home. Doyle wrote:

If Miss Rye and Miss Macpherson were less anxious to get the children off their hands immediately upon their arrival, not only would they be able to exercise greater discrimination in selecting places, but they would be able to get them out on better terms.⁶⁸

Doyle's biggest criticism however was about the lack of supervision given to the children after they were placed out.⁶⁹ Rye agreed that it was necessary to have an adequate system of supervision, but she did not have one in place.⁷⁰ Although in some cases she was conversant with the situation of a child, he said there were many more where the child was completely lost. Doyle listed in his report twenty-four cases of children whose present address was not known.⁷¹ Rye, he reiterated, had lost sight of many of her children, and others had not been visited for more than two or three years. He said he found many cases of cruel treatment of the children; one had been flogged; one horse-whipped; one fed on bread and water; one left without food

⁶⁷ Doyle 1875, p.11.

⁶⁸ Doyle 1875, p.20.

⁶⁹ Doyle 1875, p.20.

⁷⁰ Doyle 1875, p.22.

⁷¹ Doyle 1875, pp.27-28.

for twenty-four hours.⁷² Many did not have a proper room in which to sleep and there were cases of girls who were not sufficiently protected from men in the employ of the farmers.⁷³

Before starting his inquiry Doyle had asked the distributing homes to fill in a form supplying him with basic information on all the children who had gone through their agency. He stated that from Rye's records he 'obtained little more than the names and addresses' and even that information was not always available.⁷⁴ Although the majority of children were settled with farming families there were also some who were put in employment in the towns and villages. Doyle disagreed with this because he felt they were open to more temptations. They were also more inclined to move places in search of better pay, which he felt encouraged 'unsettled habits'.⁷⁵

After giving an overview of the system that brought the children out to Canada, Doyle detailed the areas which he felt needed improvement and made recommendations. He said there had been complaints of insubordination, petty theft and also more serious crimes, from members of the Canadian community. He was at pains to point out that the problem did not apply exclusively to the 'arab children'.⁷⁶ He believed the whole system would break down unless the children were given adequate training before being placed in employment. He had found that there was a higher percentage of failure with children who had been brought in early teens and put straight to work on a Canadian farm. This was hard and rough work and Doyle was of the opinion that training in Canada until they were used to Canadian ways would be a better

⁷² Doyle 1875, p.30.

⁷³ Doyle 1875, p.29.

⁷⁴ Doyle 1875, p.32.

⁷⁵ Doyle 1875, p.12.

⁷⁶ Doyle 1875, p.15.

preparation and would result in a higher success rate.⁷⁷ He thought that the feeling of dissatisfaction among the employers was greater than Rye was aware of. He was also of the opinion that many employers were content to overlook much in order to have the cheap labour they desperately needed.⁷⁸

Another recommendation he made was that it would be better if the children who went from England were young in order that they could be adopted. He believed that the younger children would not have formed strong attachments to family in England. However, when they reached the age of nine plus, he said they were likely to feel the loss of family more keenly, and it would take them a long time to get over their homesickness. Again it is seen that the children and their families were not credited with having close relationships. Perhaps it was felt that poverty nullified natural feelings.

To end his report Doyle repeated a point he had made earlier that ‘arab children’ and pauper children from the workhouses should not be sent out under the same agencies. He was very indignant that the two classes of children were being portrayed as coming from the same background. He said they are all represented as ‘the offspring of thieves and vagabonds just swept from the slums of our great cities’. In fact he said on occasion pauper children were referred to as ‘the refuse of our workhouses’.⁷⁹ Doyle felt the workhouse system was the best way to care for destitute children; he believed they were given as good a chance in life as it was possible to give them and so he resented this portrayal. Doyle’s remit was to investigate the fate of the pauper children and he had no authority over the street children. However he said that

⁷⁷ Doyle 1875, p.31.

⁷⁸ Doyle 1875, p.16.

⁷⁹ Doyle 1875, p.35.

because they were all dealt with in the same way it was difficult to distinguish between them. After the report was published, the workhouse guardians temporarily withdrew permission for children to be emigrated.

Rye protested against the Doyle report, refuting the main criticisms aimed at her. She stated that many of them contradicted the '*viva voce* declarations' he had made to her and others in Canada. In December 1876 Rye wrote to the president of the Local Government Board setting out her side of the story. She apologised for the length of time that had elapsed since the Doyle report had been published but said it had been necessary in order that she could amass the information that she felt was necessary to defend her position. She wrote convincingly of the great advantage that was being given to the children who were taken to begin a new life in Canada. She described the Canadian people as 'substantial, orderly, comfortable, and well-established' and said that a 'great injustice' had been done to them as well as to herself by the report.⁸⁰ She stated that she had written to over 1100 people who had received one of the children asking for up to date information about them; many had replied and over 500 had sent a photograph of the child. This correspondence she felt justified everything she had been doing over the last few years and she therefore put it forward in her defence. She also compared her work to a report she had seen in *The Times* which gave the statistics for absconding and death in Reformatory and Certified Industrial Schools in England. These figures she felt proved it was more advantageous to a child to be in Canada than at one of these schools. The girls who did not settle and who had to be moved from place to place were, she maintained, the exception and not the rule. This, she said, was 'Mr Doyle's great cruelty' to quote these cases as if they were

⁸⁰ Report to Local Government Board 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.1.

‘representative’. She stated that it was possible to find placements for these children in Canada whereas in England they would not be employable after the second if not the first break down.⁸¹ She stated that in six years she had only lost touch with twenty-eight children who were still under the age of fifteen.⁸²

Rye seemed particularly hurt by one of the criticisms made by Doyle; that she had failed ‘to secure the affections’ of the children who had been in her care. This she said would have been impossible because of the huge number involved and the great ‘variety of natures, dispositions, talents, tempers’ both of the children and herself. She also seems to have felt it would not be fair to the children because they would then have to transfer their affections to the host family where they would be living. However, she pointed out that in nearly all of the letters received the ‘respect’ of the child was given to her. Also, she said, when in September 1874 she had arranged for Doyle to meet as many of the children as could be gathered at Our Western Home, over 300 children had ‘sufficient affection’ for her to make the journey. Doyle himself however did not turn up for this meeting. Rye said he had commented on the ‘impassable roads’ he had to travel when visiting the children and she left the impression that this was the reason for his non-appearance. Nevertheless in spite of these difficulties the fact was, she said, that 300 children, ‘the Bishop of Toronto, the Archdeacon of, and the member for, Niagara, together with several Justices of the Peace’ attended. Doyle had, she stated, been given a fortnight’s notice of the meeting.⁸³

⁸¹ ‘The Emigration of infant children to Canada’ (LUSCA D630/2/8), pp.2-3.

⁸² ‘The Emigration of infant children to Canada’ (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.6.

⁸³ ‘The Emigration of infant children to Canada’ (LUSCA D630/2/8), pp.3-4.

In the letter Rye put forward her reasons for believing that Canada was superior to any of the other colonies to receive the children. Some years earlier pauper children had been emigrated to South Africa. To this she had many objections, not least being the 'great preponderance there of coloured peoples' which was she said a 'great drawback'. Whether this was because they would fill the places of servants instead of the pauper children or whether there was a racial reason for her remark she does not make clear. Another objection was that there were at that time many rich people in South Africa and she felt that the pauper children would not settle in these homes as well as in a more ordinary situation. In Canada she said there were no 'luxurious homes', which were not the proper place for pauper children; no great poverty; no 'admixture of races'; the voyage was no longer than fourteen days; and the country was a healthy place for the children.⁸⁴ She gave statistical evidence of the health of the children, fifteen dead out of 1100 children in six years and six of these had happened in an accident. She also included her medical and drug bill for scrutiny. This latter however does not appear to have been preserved.⁸⁵

She admitted she had been short of staff but said it was due to lack of resources.⁸⁶

When the emigration programme was to begin again she said she would need £12 a head instead of £8 for each child taken from the workhouses. The reason for this was that she was to follow one of the recommendations and have a separate house for girls who were returned for any reason.⁸⁷ Rye concluded her letter by re-iterating that the Canadian officials and people were willing to accept the children and that many of the

⁸⁴ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), pp.5-6.

⁸⁵ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.5.

⁸⁶ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.5.

⁸⁷ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.8.

workhouses who had formerly sent children were willing to use her services again.⁸⁸ Attached to the letter Rye gave a list of various statements that Doyle had made in his report and to each one put her answer which in the main refuted the statements.⁸⁹ She criticised him for not giving the names of children mentioned in the report: because of this she was not able to give a satisfactory answer. However, for the initials she put probable names and in each case the age of the person named was over eighteen and therefore no longer a child. She referred to a synopsis of each child but this does not appear to have been preserved. Of his comment on the cleanliness of the children she stated that many of the children who came to her from some of the workhouses had unclean heads. She went on to say that it would be impossible for the matron on board ship to cleanse the heads of the children with 'most probably children and matrons all sick together'.⁹⁰ She utterly denied hearing the children referred to as 'the refuse of our workhouses'⁹¹ saying it was a phrase she herself would never use. However she does not seem to find the terms she often used, 'gutter children' or 'wastrel girls' offensive.

Doyle had criticised Rye's handling of her financial affairs, saying that it was difficult to obtain her accounts.⁹² She did however give a list of donations and a short balance sheet in each annual report. For example in the year 13th July 1872 to 13th July 1873 details of the £4,875 12s. 4d which had been received was given as were details of the expenditure of this money from the purchase of land 'adjoining the house' to food, drink, clothing, wages and administrative costs.⁹³ This demonstrates that accounts

⁸⁸ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.9.

⁸⁹ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), pp.10-13.

⁹⁰ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.11.

⁹¹ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.13.

⁹² Doyle 1875, p.34.

⁹³ Annual Report 1874 (LUSCA D630/1/1), p.18.

must have been kept if only in a basic fashion. Doyle had stated that Our Western Home had been bought for Rye by subscription. To this she replied that it had been bought with money given when she appealed in *The Times* for help in getting her scheme off the ground. It was, she said, money 'earned by my own pen and hard labour'.⁹⁴ By this statement she obviously meant the number of letters of appeal. Diamond states that though 'she had not written professionally since leaving the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* to sail to New Zealand', the title deeds to the house were in her name and that she 'treated it as hers to dispose of' when she retired. Diamond also believes that the house was apparently bought with the donations given at the time when she wrote about the 'Gutter Children' in *The Times*,⁹⁵ thus substantiating Doyle's claims.

After much discussion in both Canada and England, emigration of pauper children was allowed to restart in 1877. There were, however, tighter controls and the Canadian Government had agreed to a programme of inspection for the children. Although Rye appeared to feel she was harshly dealt with, she re-commenced her work with some new methods put in place. This again shows the character of the woman; she did not immediately adhere to all the recommendations but argued her corner believing always that she was right in what she was doing. When the emigration programme restarted some of the children who were then taken to Canada, had lived at the home in Peckham for up to three years.

On reading Rye's letter Doyle put forward his reply in June 1877. He reiterated many of the main points in his report and said he stood by them all. He was not impressed

⁹⁴ 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.10.

⁹⁵ Diamond, p.246.

by Rye's letter and her explanations. He referred to the synopsis Rye had made of the children and proved from it that children who were taken out when in their teens were much less likely to settle in employment.⁹⁶ He also repeated that he felt their terms of employment were biased in favour of the employer rather than the children.⁹⁷ He made much of Rye's descriptions of some of the children in her synopsis, 'lazy and troublesome', 'extreme filthiness of personal habits' and 'incorrigibly naughty or else a semi-lunatic' are just three he quoted.⁹⁸ Comments like these, he claimed, were examples of the way the girls were presented. In his view this was unfair because the girls had no way of appealing against such judgements.

He again stressed the need for supervision of the children and Rye came in for strict censure in this respect.⁹⁹ He named other child savers who were attempting much better supervision and backed up his statements with evidence from well-known and respected public figures, for example Lord Shaftesbury. He believed that Rye's method of keeping contact with her children only through letters from their employers was at the very least unsatisfactory. He wrote that instead of visiting the children to ascertain that they were in good health and being treated fairly she accepted 'without question the master's version of his own conduct towards his servant.'¹⁰⁰ He gave very sad stories of the treatment meted out to some of the girls. Some had never been visited and so had not received help so desperately needed from those who were responsible for them. He told of one girl who had given birth to an illegitimate child,

⁹⁶ Doyle 'Pauper Children (Emigration to Canada)' 1877, Reply to Maria Rye's report, House of Commons Papers, p.3.

<<http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk.libezproxy.open.ac.uk/fullrec/fullrec.do?area=hcpp>> [accessed 10 January 2006].

⁹⁷ Doyle 1877, p.3.

⁹⁸ Doyle 1877, p.4.

⁹⁹ Doyle 1877, p.4.

¹⁰⁰ Doyle 1877, pp.4-6.

fathered by a son of the family where she was in service. She had gone to Canada aged thirteen and at the age of seventeen had never received any wages. Of this situation Doyle made this comment, 'Miss Rye and her friend the "legally appointed guardian," lived within an hour's journey of that unhappy girl's place of service.'¹⁰¹ He also refuted the statement by Rye that the children he identified by initials in his earlier report were all either over the age of twenty or were well accounted for. He went on to prove that the initials could easily refer to many other girls who were under the age of eighteen and who had been lost sight of.¹⁰²

After making these comments Doyle went on to correct some of the statements that Rye had made. Doyle was adamant he was correct and claimed that he had the necessary figures in front of him. The dispute referred to the number of children who were still in the same placement and also the number of children who had been placed in the United States. Rye alleged that Doyle had charged her with the 'deadly crime' of placing children in the United States, whereas Doyle stated he only mentioned the fact. However he then went on to give the reasons why this should not have happened. He said she was 'violating the condition under which they were entrusted to her, as well as the rules of the Department, that had sanctioned their emigration to *Canada only*;¹⁰³ Moreover he also asserted that the United States was not willing to take 'pauper children', but only those people who were able to finance their own emigration.

Doyle gave his reason for not being at the 'gathering' that Rye had arranged which she said was for his benefit. He said he had not received an invitation to that effect.

¹⁰¹ Doyle 1877, pp.7-8.

¹⁰² Doyle 1877, pp.10-11.

¹⁰³ Doyle 1877, pp.11-12.

It had been represented as the wedding of a young lady from the home, and his being there had only been incidental to that event. The invitations had stated that all the women and girls should come in white dresses in order to make 'a very pretty wedding' and 'to show Mr Doyle what great things Canada can do for poor children'. Doyle said he had written to Rye a few days before the event to say he would not be able to be present. He went on to say that he also felt it would have given a wrong impression of the true state of affairs and he gave an illustration of why he felt this. He had visited a child who was placed in a situation which was unsuitable to her needs. The man and his wife were decent hard-working people but they were very poor and could not afford to keep the child. They had written to Rye asking for her to be removed and had received the reply that they must return her themselves. This they could not afford to do. Doyle stated that had the woman and child attended the 'gathering' in white dresses it would have given him a totally wrong impression of the true situation of a 'poor seven-year-old mite whom [he] had just seen grubbing in a dustbin'. In a report of the 'gathering' in an influential newspaper he stated he had seen the children referred to as 'refuse of the workhouses'.¹⁰⁴ This is where the statement in his earlier report had come from. From the examples that Doyle gave Rye appears to have washed her hands of the girls as soon as they were placed in situations. She admitted that she had not enough staff to be able to visit the children and ensure they were being adequately cared for.

Doyle then repeated his belief that the pauper children did not need emigration because there was sufficient capacity within the workhouse system to train them for work in their home country. However he felt that emigration was a good thing for the

¹⁰⁴ Doyle 1877, p.13.

destitute children who it might be said were 'the raw material of our criminal classes and who swarm in our cities and large towns'.¹⁰⁵ This was a definite criticism of Rye who was responsible for transporting many children from the workhouses. He also criticised her for placing girls in the towns and cities of Canada where they would be exposed to 'the greatest danger'. He objected strongly to one incident he had heard of. He said fifty or sixty children had been taken to the Public Hall in Chatham and put 'on view'. People then came in and selected a child to whom they had 'taken a fancy'. This was, he thought, an 'objectionable way of disposing of these children'.¹⁰⁶ He went on to state that the children were not always brought up in the Christian denomination of their parents. If they had been left in England at least this would have been so. In many cases the children were not able to attend a place of worship at all.¹⁰⁷

Doyle went on to discuss the financial report. He said that Rye had stated in a letter to the Local Government Board dated 10th June 1872 that 'The moneys which purchased and furnished our Western Home came by public subscription'. However, he said, it now appeared that Rye had bought it with her own money and so it was 'her private property'. He further stated that there was a discrepancy between the amount that Rye said she received from the Local Government Board to assist the passage of the pauper children, and the amount that the Board had given orders to be issued to her. Doyle then justified himself for not having produced a full financial report. This, he wrote, was because he was not able to obtain statements, receipts and bank details from Rye. Although in her letter she had stated he was not willing to

¹⁰⁵ Doyle 1877, p.13.

¹⁰⁶ Doyle 1877, p.14.

¹⁰⁷ Doyle 1877, p.14.

undertake this task, he said that he had asked repeatedly for the information.¹⁰⁸ He then concluded his letter reiterating his belief that no more children should be emigrated in this way. He repeated the problem of the lost children; those who had been 'lost sight of'. The figures he believed were far more than Rye would admit to, many of them being over the age of fifteen but under eighteen. There were he said, many who were mothers of illegitimate children who had been 'seduced by their masters or master's sons'. He believed that instead of adding to their numbers, those who were already there should be given adequate protection. He concluded with this statement: 'I cannot believe that any board of guardians in the kingdom, when informed of the conditions and results of Miss Rye's present system of emigration, would ask you to sanction the emigration of another child under it.'¹⁰⁹

In the annual report of 1878 Rye referred to the Doyle report and stated that by her own instigation the Canadian Government had agreed to carry out an inspection of all the children she had been instrumental in taking to Canada. She said that although they had had failures, ninety-five per cent of the girls were doing well and there had not been more than 'five examples in the thousand' of 'gross immoralities'.¹¹⁰ In this report she also justified her reasons for taking the girls out of the country instead of settling them in employment in England. The average age of the girls, she said, was only nine years and so they had a long time to wait before they could be employed. In the meantime they could look forward to no future except to become 'habitual drunkards', 'nameless miserable outcasts', they were 'children whose heritage here from birth to death is sin, shame, misery, and destruction'.¹¹¹ These were harsh words

¹⁰⁸ Doyle 1877, p.15.

¹⁰⁹ Doyle 1877, p.16.

¹¹⁰ Annual Report 1878 (LUSCA D630/1/2), p.11.

¹¹¹ Annual Report 1878 (LUSCA D630/1/2), p.11.

indeed, and she reinforced them by asking the reader to look at the women who were in the prisons, saying this would show what the end result of leaving them alone would be. As far as the girls were concerned she did not mince her words: they were 'gutter children', 'street arabs', 'pauper children' and 'wastrel girls'. Of course this was in the reports and letters to the newspapers and all intended to arouse the sympathy of the reader. The bitter dispute between Doyle and Rye was between two very strong characters who were intent on proving their own point. They held opposing views and were not going to give way or compromise. Another factor as far as Rye was concerned was that Doyle was a Roman Catholic and, as stated early on in this chapter, she would not employ anyone of this faith when she ran the law-copying firm. This must have coloured her attitude to him somewhat.

In 1883 Annie Macpherson, who was also involved in the emigration of destitute children, wrote a letter to the *Times* entitled 'The Supervision of Emigrated Children'. This letter will be analysed in more detail when I discuss the work of Macpherson. Its relevance here is to highlight one or two comments made which provoked a response from Rye. After discussing some of the problems of supervising the children, Macpherson stressed the importance of having a home-base in Canada where the children could be cared for if they were ill. One reason for this was, she said, that Canada was a new country and did not have as many hospitals as England. Another reason was that there was a lack of people ready to adopt, so the younger children often had to stay in the distributing home. The people of Canada needed older children to become servants. Without mentioning any names she said that 'It would be well if those who are urging the wholesale emigration of the pauper children from our workhouses would inquire first of the Canadian Government if they are prepared

to receive them.’¹¹² Rye, always ready to justify her work, was quick to respond. She picked up first on the comment about the hospitals. They were, she said, ‘excellent’ with ‘good schools of medicine attached’. She then went on to say that if Miss Macpherson had such a ‘gloomy view’ of the outlook for the children in Canada then she should carry ‘no more little ones from their native land’. She ended by saying that ‘Rumour has it [however] that she starts in June with a large party’.¹¹³

The controversy surrounding Rye did not go away but she was always ready to fight for what she believed in. One such debate was with J.J. Kelso who had written to her asking for information about the setting up of similar work. In 1893 when the Children’s Protection Act was passed Kelso was appointed by the Canadian Government as Superintendent with the responsibility of setting up Children’s Aid Societies. Rye replied in October 1893 answering his questions about the regime in the home, the checks made on the people the girls were employed by and the health of the girls.¹¹⁴ However this led to more correspondence when an article appeared in the *Evening Telegram* that Rye took issue with. The article had stated that ‘Several cases have come under the writer’s notice in which girls who have gone astray have been cast off by Miss Rye. No efforts have been made to reclaim them once they have stepped aside from virtue’s paths.’ Rye strongly refuted these allegations and demanded an apology.¹¹⁵ By December 1893 she had an apology from Kelso and an amended version in the paper. She replied to him ‘No possible good can come to your work by running down the work of others’.¹¹⁶

¹¹² *The Times* 15th May 1883 p.8, col.e.

¹¹³ *The Times* 23rd May 1883 p.12 col.a.

¹¹⁴ Correspondence with Kelso (LUSCA D630/4/3).

¹¹⁵ Correspondence with Kelso (LUSCA D630/4/4).

¹¹⁶ Correspondence with Kelso (LUSCA D630/4/5).

Researching the subject of child immigration, Kenneth Bagnell (1980) investigated all the organisations involved and gave a summary from the Canadian point of view. His assessment of Rye's character was that she was a 'domineering, free-wheeling woman who brooked no interference'.¹¹⁷ He claims that on her retirement in 1897 Kelso was relieved when the organisation was handed over to the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society. He quotes Kelso as saying that no effort had been made for the supervision of the children and that Rye felt that other homes were going to unnecessary expense by providing visitors.¹¹⁸

There are a number of points of difference between Rye and the other philanthropists who were saving children. Her first concern was for girls rather than boys; the majority of the children she took to Canada were pauper children from the workhouses even though she used the plight of the street children in her promotional material; and emigration of the children came before care in England. She was motivated initially by her evangelical Christian principles. Her plan was that the children would be placed with Christian people and it was expected that they would be allowed to attend church and Sunday school. In 1887 she wrote:

each child admitted is one more fresh soul with its infinite capabilities for good and evil – one to be wrestled with and for ... Nearly twenty years have I lived with these nobody's children (no mere Committee woman with theories and pet schemes), and thankfully would I set my seal – that there is no such thing as hereditary *sin*.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Kenneth Bagnell, *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans who came to Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1980), p.32.

¹¹⁸ Bagnell, p.184.

¹¹⁹ Annual Report 1887 (LUSCA D630/1/11), p.7.

However there are no details of the kind of Christian teaching the children were given whilst in her care. Neither, from the reports, does it seem likely that she checked to make sure the children were receiving Christian teaching in the homes in which she had placed them.

Rye believed that emigration was the answer to many social problems, not least the unemployment situation. The girls would have a better chance of improving their life by living in Canada than if they were left in the workhouses or on the streets of England. In 1885, she wrote, 'the great object of the work being to save children, and not to swell the number of the young emigrants.'¹²⁰ One of her more emotive reports gave this picture of the life she believed the girls could expect if left in England:

Who is going to train, and feed, and teach them? Recollect my children are outcasts, beggars, homeless, destitute little ones – children whom no one wants ... so remember that if these children do remain here they would never get into your service, they would not grow into even working, to say nothing of Christian, women, but would grow up into our habitual drunkards, our tramps, and the mothers of more tramps [...] children whose heritage here from birth to death is sin, shame, misery, and destruction.¹²¹

Unfortunately her methods of distribution and lack of supervisory visits meant that for many the experience of emigration was not a good one.

Rye was a woman of strong views with determination to carry them through. She was implacable when she believed her way was right. She thought it was better for the child to be cut off from the past; from parents and relatives who did not live up to her

¹²⁰ Annual Report 1885 (LUSCA D630/1/9), p.11.

¹²¹ Annual Report 1878 (LUSCA D630/1/2), p.11.

own exacting principles. She believed that by living with Christian people the child would learn to become an honest upright citizen. When she was criticised by Doyle she replied that she felt an injustice had been done to the children as well as to the Canadian people. However of herself she said:

I need not say anything about the injustice done to myself, for the great glory of all true work is that *in* the keeping of His commands THERE is the reward, and a thousand Mr Doyles (sic) could not touch me on that point.¹²²

It would seem that although initially her motivation was the welfare of the children and she appeared to really believe her own publicity material; her personality was not that of a motherly person who was sensitive to the worries and needs of small children uprooted from their home country.

¹²² 'The Emigration of infant children to Canada' (LUSCA D630/2/8), p.1.

Chapter 11

Canada for 'the little Matchbox makers'

Annie MacPherson

Annie MacPherson (1824-1904) was born in Scotland, but when her father died in 1851 she and her mother moved, first to Cambridgeshire and then to London. She had been brought up in a Christian home, her parents being members of the Society of Friends. Her father was by profession a teacher and Macpherson herself had been educated at the Home and Colonial Training College, Gray's Inn Road, London. In 1861, at a revival meeting in London, her Christian faith became real to her in a personal way. Also at this time she became aware of the extreme poverty in which so many men, women and children lived; especially in the East End of London. The situation which disturbed her most was that not only were they very poor in material possessions, but many of them were also completely ignorant of the Christian faith. Her own faith made it impossible for her to ignore this. Although she had been brought up within the Quaker movement with its tradition of 'Quietism – the supremacy of "The Holy Spirit within"', she held strong evangelical beliefs. For the rest of her life she endeavoured to teach the Christian gospel to as many people as she could; not the least of those being the children she rescued from poverty and re-settled in Canada.

After her conversion, Macpherson became concerned for the spiritual welfare of the many coprolite diggers who worked in Cambridgeshire where she was living. When coprolite (fossil manure) was discovered, hundreds of miners and labourers had

poured into the area. The quiet country villages into which they came had no accommodation for them and so many of them lived rough. This caused unease to the church leaders and the wealthier people of the area because they were coarse uncouth men. Concern was felt for the morals of the villagers who it was thought might be led astray by the 'drunken and loose habits' of the workers.¹ Although she was afraid, Macpherson handed out tracts to the men and invited them to the mission hall. However Lillian Birt, her niece, wrote that she was met with 'sneers and scoffing'.² She found this very hard but she felt it was her duty to share her faith with others, especially those who apparently knew very little about Christianity. As time went on her involvement with the coprolite workers grew. She organised evening schools, lending libraries and coffee sheds. Her vision was for a mission hall for the men, somewhere they could go to in the evenings. Alcohol, she was convinced, was the one big stumbling block that was preventing many men and women from living a moral Christian life; 'the cursed drink' she called it.³ She believed that by providing a building where the men could go after work; somewhere where they could have a meal and listen to the scriptures, they would not then be tempted to visit the public house. Mission services and prayer meetings were organised for the men and although Macpherson organised many of them she herself did not preach. This was always the prerogative of the men, which she felt was the proper order of things. In a letter to Dr Elwin she wrote:

Is it not kind of the Master to employ us feeble women in His service, by allowing us to use our quieter influence for Him, and to do many little things,

¹ Lillian Birt, *The Children's Home-finder: The story of Annie Macpherson and Louisa Birt* (London: Nisbet, 1913), p.10.

² Birt, p.10.

³ Clara Lowe, *God's Answers: A Record of Miss Annie Macpherson's Work at the Home of Industry, Spitalfields, London and in Canada* (The Project Gutenberg Ebook 2003 godsa 10.txt), p.8. <http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/> etext 6713.

such as inviting wanderers to listen, providing hymns and seats, also refreshment for those sent to deliver the King's message?⁴

However in her future life, especially her work for destitute children, she went on to prove that she was anything but 'feeble'.

Whilst living in Cambridgeshire Macpherson visited London many times and was appalled at the sights that met her. Birt wrote 'At that period the East End was a gloomy district of over a million people, who dwelt in indescribable slums and worked incredibly long hours for starvation pay.'⁵ Disease was everywhere especially tuberculosis and smallpox. Macpherson wrote in her journal that four out of every five children died before they were five. However Birt commented that she had felt this was 'no bad thing' because many of them had been 'brought up on gin' and that it was not uncommon to see girls as young as ten 'reeling drunk along the streets.'⁶ Macpherson, her family and friends, all believed that the consumption of alcohol was the curse of modern society and that it was the cause of so many wrecked lives especially among the poor. The moral welfare of the people of the East End was also of pressing concern. Her niece wrote that over 3000 thieves lived in the area when Macpherson first began her work there.⁷ Whilst these numbers may not have been accurate, they show how desperately poor the East End was in this period.

In 1865 she moved to London where she soon became closely involved in Christian work. After a number of evangelistic services held in the City of London Theatre a room was rented and a small group of women began to meet each week for Bible

⁴ Lowe, p.8.

⁵ Birt, p.23.

⁶ Birt, p.25.

⁷ Birt, p.26.

reading and prayer. Macpherson was one of the leaders of this group. She sold second hand clothes to the mothers and taught them some hygiene rules, selling towels for a penny. Cleanliness was believed to be the first step to a raised standard of living. When discussing the Victorian interest in visiting the slums Seth Koven states that:

for some slumming was merely an evening's titillation, fodder for conversations at fashionable dinner parties. But for many others, their encounters with dirt stimulated an abiding desire to clean up the city, to gain deeper empathy for their poor sisters.⁸

When Macpherson visited the homes of the poor she was especially concerned for those who spent all day every day making matchboxes for a pittance. She found that children as young as three and four were hired to do this job. To bring the situation to the attention of other people she wrote a booklet entitled *The Little Matchbox Makers*. In it she described one of the rooms she visited where she saw boxes drying everywhere and where the children earned three farthings for making a gross. She wrote, 'this touching scene gave a lasting impression of childhood's sorrows; never a moment for school or play, but ceaseless toil from light till dark'. For each gross 288 pieces of wood had to be bent, sanded and covered with paper, so it was very hard work for young fingers. One little girl had been making boxes since she was three and now at four years old made several hundred a day and from her earnings paid the rent of the room where her family lived. Macpherson wrote that the child did not know what 'play' meant, and that she had never been out of the area where she was born and had never 'seen a tree, or a daisy, or a blade of grass.' Here Macpherson's

⁸ Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.198.

language was intentionally emotive in order to have the greatest effect on her readers. She was deeply affected by these sights and felt profound compassion for the children; so much so that she gave the impression that she felt they would almost be better off dead than living in this way. Of the little girl just mentioned she wrote:

A poor, sickly little thing, and yet a sweet obedient child; the deadly pallor of her face proclaiming unmistakably that she will soon be mercifully taken away to a better world, where at last the weary little fingers shall be at rest.⁹

After reading the booklet an anonymous donor sent £1, care of *The Revival* newspaper, with the request that it was to be used towards a tea-meeting 'for the poor little children of Bethnal Green who toil to get their living and die old at an early age.'¹⁰ From this first donation more funds were collected and Birt wrote that cellars and garrets were searched and over 1300 children were invited to the party. The ages ranged from four to fourteen years. Following this event Macpherson's concern for the children grew and she became determined that something must be done to help the children who lived on the streets with no one to care for them.

She decided to invite some of the shoeblack boys to the mission hall for tea, thinking that the promise of a meal would entice them. However none of them turned up. When they were asked a second time they said it was not the tea they were refusing but they did not want to come to the mission hall. As a result of this Macpherson invited them to tea at a lodging house, a place that she referred to as 'an abode of thieves'.¹¹ The party was very noisy and the boys rather unruly, but it was the start of her work with them. She described how ill-clad the boys were and also the places

⁹ Birt, p.33.

¹⁰ Birt, p.35.

¹¹ Annie Macpherson, *The Little London Arabs* (London: Morgan and Chase, undated), chapter 1.

where they slept at night – ‘pipes, apple tubs, railway arches’; and she said ‘[we] were haunted in our comfortable home’ at the thought of them.¹² She was allowed the use of a room at the Bedford Institute and she persuaded the boys to come and listen to the ‘story of the Cross’.¹³ She also arranged a weeknight evening when they could come and learn to read and write. At first the boys were very rowdy and many of them could not see a reason to become literate. They could not see how it would help them to earn a living. Macpherson however continued with the evening classes, the numbers attending grew and the behaviour of the boys gradually calmed down. The evenings always ended with Bible reading and prayer. But throughout she was concerned about the fact that the boys lacked parental care.

In 1868 a house was rented and an appeal was made for people to give £6.10s in order to pay for the maintenance of a child for a year. The first home was for destitute boys under the age of ten years and six boys who seemed in the most need were chosen to be cared for. Next a house for girls was opened because many of the boys had sisters who also needed care. Birt cited the case of a little girl aged seven years who was seen crying when parting from her brother who was admitted to the boys’ home. She was frightened to be left alone. She had been sleeping in the streets with her brother for two nights because her drunkard father had turned the mother and her two children out of the house.¹⁴ No mention is made of why the girl was not with her mother, so one is left to either assume that she had deserted the children, had gone back to her husband, or had died. Soon a third home for older boys, ten to thirteen year olds, was needed and then a fourth. The children were taught to read and write, and they were also trained ‘to be useful’, ‘to patch and tailor, make and mend, or attend to the

¹² Macpherson, chapter 1.

¹³ Macpherson, chapter 3.

¹⁴ Birt, p.46.

housework'.¹⁵ The homes were called the 'Revival Homes' because most of the money donated in support of this work came from people who read *The Revival*. No records for these homes would appear to have survived, nor is there any information other than is recorded in the biography written by Macpherson's niece Lillian Birt in 1913.

It was found to be very hard at first to care for the children because many of them had not lived in a house or slept in a bed for as long as they could remember. They were unused to discipline and found it difficult to live in a communal situation. It is recorded that they had to have someone with them when they were put to bed in order to stop them fighting. Macpherson seemed surprised that after providing beds for these children they then had '*to teach them to sleep in them*'.¹⁶ However Birt went on to say that in time they 'learnt to play, laugh, work and sit still like ordinary children'.¹⁷ Although their age defined them as children they were different, other beings because they did not conform to the standards of middle class society. They were 'uncivilised'¹⁸, untaught, uncared for, and often cared for no one. They were suspicious of adults and authority, and rightly so in many cases, when all they had ever received from such sources was abuse, cruelty and imprisonment.

The behaviour of the children in the Revival Homes improved, and this convinced the people who were interested in the work that larger premises were needed to care for the ever-increasing number. At the end of 1868 money became available and a large warehouse in Commercial Street was rented. During the cholera epidemic of 1866 it

¹⁵ Birt, p.50.

¹⁶ Birt, p.52.

¹⁷ Birt, p.52.

¹⁸ Birt, p.52.

had been used as an emergency hospital and so gas and water had been piped to all floors. The building was large and would be able to sleep 120 children or even 200 in an emergency. There were large rooms which could be used as schoolrooms and workshops. It also had a large kitchen on the top floor.¹⁹ Having obtained the premises it was considered necessary to find a man who would oversee the project. George Holland, who ran a ragged school, was asked if he would take on the task but he declined; he felt his own work was too important to leave. Eventually Macpherson herself was persuaded to become head of the project and she agreed to offer her services 'for a few months' so that the house could be opened.²⁰

The Home of Industry, as it was named, opened at the beginning of 1869, a beehive was chosen for its emblem, and it certainly lived up to its name. On the various floors of the building, different trades were pursued, tailoring, shoemaking and matchbox making. Having the little matchbox makers working on the premises meant that the children had food, and time was set aside for schooling. Macpherson also made sure that they were given Christian teaching. Throughout all her work this was of vital importance to her. She invited the mothers who were available, to come one afternoon a week to do some needlework, for which they could earn sixpence. Her object in this was twofold – 'to secure an opportunity of telling them the Gospel, and to endeavour to help them in the management of their homes and little ones'.²¹ Here again it is shown that her first priority was to teach Christianity.

Macpherson was head of the new project but she did not live full time at the Home of Industry. One night when sleeping at the refuge she described the sounds she could

¹⁹ Birt, pp.53-54.

²⁰ Birt, p.54.

²¹ Birt, p.55.

hear outside, 'cries of 'Murder!' then of 'Police!' the 'rushing to and fro of wild, drunken men and women', and at three o'clock in the morning the 'rumble of market-waggons'.²² Although she was intent on helping the poor, especially the children, she was obviously uneasy about the way of life of the people. However the comment has to be made that she also had a picturesque command of language when describing a situation.

A visitor to the Home, whose name is not given, gave his impressions of the area. He said there were lodging houses which accommodated as many as 350 men most of whom were unemployed but who, given the chance, would have taken any job. The homes were very poor; an example he gave was one where a widow took in washing and her two children made matchboxes. Washing hung about the room on lines and the children at ten o'clock at night were still making matchboxes and had been doing since half-past six in the morning. 'Life' he said 'seemed a terribly serious thing' to the children who had no respite from work and at night had only a 'bedstead with a bundle of dirty rags' to sleep on and no covers. They were, he commented, 'little human machines' and the number of matchboxes they could make in a day was 'most remarkable'.²³ This would appear to be one of the wealthier Victorians following the interest of so many in visiting the homes of the slum dwellers.

The Home of Industry was not opened simply as a children's home. It certainly was intended to give refuge to homeless boys and girls, but its main purpose was a missionary one. Bible classes and Sunday schools were held there and each Sunday morning Macpherson with a group of helpers went to Petticoat Lane market to hold an

²² Lowe, p.13.

²³ Lowe, p.15.

open-air service. Birt wrote that the 'Home became a training school for Christian workers, or rather a practice school, where they were led out and shown how to utilise their gifts "for the Master's use"'.²⁴ As I have already mentioned the premises were put to full use making goods and giving the children training in trades, as well as teaching them to read and write. Although the Home of Industry does not appear to have been run on anything like the family system, the children were cared for, given some education and when old enough, an opportunity to work and make a better life than they could ever have dreamed of previously.

The problem of the homeless and destitute was so great that Macpherson became convinced that the answer lay in emigration. This she believed would relieve the work situation at home as well as giving the emigrants a new start in life. To begin what was to become a huge project, Macpherson, with a friend Ellen Logan, wrote a circular entitled 'Emigration the only remedy for chronic pauperism in the East of London'. In it they wrote of the destitution and lack of employment in the East End of London and compared it with the wide-open spaces of Canada where work was plentiful and a good life available for those willing to go. 'We are waiting to seek out the worthy, not yet on the parish list, but who soon must be'²⁵ was the plea. They appealed for donations to set up an emigration fund. At first it was arranged to send out families and during the first year as many as fifty families were helped to start a new life. Macpherson became convinced that if the children who had no one to care for them were taken and carefully placed in families in Canada they would be rescued from poverty of body, mind and soul. She wanted for them, employment so that they could be independent, education so that they could fulfil their full potential, and

²⁴ Birt, p.56.

²⁵ Birt, p.60.

Christian teaching in the hope that they would follow a Christian way of life. She went to Canada to investigate the possibilities and in 1870 took her first party of 100 boys. Her plan was to establish a Home there where the children could be cared for until they were ready to be sent out for adoption or employment.

It was thought that living in a city, in a home that had no outside space except the crowded streets in which it was situated, was not a good place in which to train children for living in the farming community of Canada. Eventually a place in the countryside was found at Hampton; and this, under the care of Mr and Mrs Merry, Macpherson's sister and brother-in-law, became the training ground for the prospective emigrants. This was opened during the period 1870–1871 and Macpherson believed it would prove to be a very valuable asset. It would, she stated, enable her to 'rescue another hundred from street-life at once.'²⁶ The children found there a much healthier atmosphere; they received good food and had plenty of exercise and so were better fitted for life overseas.

Unfortunately there are no records kept of the way in which the Home of Industry, or the home in Hampton, were used as children's homes and nothing about the staff or daily routine. However there are fairly good records of the children who emigrated and also information about the distributing homes established in Canada. There are detailed records of the children giving little personal insights into their backgrounds and whether they made a success of their life in Canada. Many went on to own land and become farmers and were able then to send for other members of their family to

²⁶ Lowe, p.26.

join them. 598 children were taken into the Home of Industry in 1870–1871.²⁷

Taking an example of the first fifty boys taken in, only nine were under the age of sixteen. These boys were among the first party of 100 to be taken to Canada. The party was made up as follows:²⁸

- 47 were sixteen years or over
- 44 thirteen to fifteen years
- 3 twelve years
- 3 eleven years
- 1 ten years
- 2 no age given

All of the boys and young men were destitute and unable to find work. Many were either orphans or had been deserted by one or both parents. For example, one boy aged eleven was taken to the Home of Industry in 1868 after sleeping rough for some time. As a young boy his mother had deserted him and his two brothers, leaving them in a small room where they had lived. She took with her everything she could and left only ‘some bread and butter and a halfpenny on the table’. After hearing them crying the landlady informed a policeman and they were taken to the workhouse. The two younger boys died and the older one was taken to live with his grandmother for a while, but she turned him out of the house, and so he was forced to live on the street.²⁹

Sometimes boys were brought to the Home of Industry from the ragged schools.

Some had fathers who had an occupation but who were unable to keep the family

²⁷ Home of Industry, Spitalfields, Book 1 (University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives, D239/J3/1/1) [hereafter to be referred to as LUSCA].

²⁸ Home of Industry, Spitalfields, Book 1 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1) [in order that individual children should not be identified no page numbers will be recorded when referring to the Spitalfields Books or the Marchmont History Books].

²⁹ Home of Industry, Spitalfields, Book 1 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1).

together, especially when the mother was dead. Macpherson had come to believe that the way to help the destitute people of London was to take them away from a life where she could see no prospect of improvement and re-settle them in Canada. In this section of the study I will be concentrating on this aspect of her work.

In May 1870 Macpherson left England with Ellen Agnes Bilbrough and 100 boys bound for Canada. The clothes for them to wear to begin their new life were all made in the Home of Industry. What follows is a description of them as they 'stood in ranks ready for departure'. They were:

dressed in rough blue jackets, corduroy suits, and strong boots, ... All alike had scarlet comforters and Glengarry caps; a canvas bag across their shoulders contained a change of linen for the voyage, towels, tin can, bowl and mug, knife, fork, and spoon.

They were also given a 'Bible, a "Pilgrim's Progress," and a little case of stationery' and lastly a 'kind friend' had given them all a 'strong pocket-knife'.³⁰ It would be obvious to everyone where they had come from because there was no attempt to hide the fact that they were from a charity organisation by dressing them individually. However, it would have made life on the journey easier for those caring for them, because of their identifiability. Although this description gives the impression of a party of young boys, as I have already stated, nearly half of these boys were in their late teens, with four being twenty and one twenty-two. Nevertheless, particularly for the older boys, this would be a chance to get paid work, to see 'the world' and test their spirit of adventure.

³⁰ Lowe, p.17.

Ships were not comfortable places for those who could only afford the cheapest accommodation. Most things needed for the journey would have to be taken with them. Many of the boys were seasick at first but after a while they were able to spend the days on deck. Macpherson wrote, not of herself being up all night caring for the boys, but of the boys themselves caring for each other. She wrote of the way they wrapped rugs round those who felt ill and carried them up on deck to take the fresh air.³¹ Teaching them self-reliance and reliance on each other, and encouraging them to be caring human beings seemed to have been very much part of her policy.

Macpherson held Christian services and prayer meetings for the party and invited anyone else on board to attend. She encouraged the boys to listen and included both crew and passengers in her prayers. At this time she seems to have taken the initiative on herself to lead the services; something which earlier in her life she believed was the responsibility of men. Birt wrote of the courage of her aunt and friend in making the journey facing 'unknown risks and discomforts' with 100 boys 'rescued from the perils of the London Slums', not knowing what they were to find on arrival.³²

On arrival they heard that there was resistance from many people in Canada when a report was circulated that '100 wild London arabs' were being brought to be let loose in the Canadian countryside. However Birt wrote that the authorities were pleasantly surprised to find the boys 'healthy and obedient' and the Canadian immigration agent offered to place the boys himself.³³ Macpherson would not agree to this because she wanted to see them settled herself and to make sure they went to Christian homes. They had landed at Quebec and eleven of the boys were settled there. They travelled on to Montreal where they stayed at the St George's home and situations for twenty-

³¹ Lowe, p.18.

³² Birt, p.62.

³³ Birt, p.62.

three boys were found in that area.³⁴ As they moved across Canada many people were willing to take the boys in but Macpherson remained adamant that she had the final say as to where they were situated. On their arrival at Belleville, Ontario, the Mayor and Council invited them to stay in the area. A house, capable of holding 200 children was rented, and they were to have it rent-free. Here it was decided they could make their base for the work in Canada.³⁵ When Macpherson returned to England, Bilbrough remained at Belleville, in order to be available for any problems that might arise with the children who were living and working in the area. This was because, as Macpherson stated, 'as yet the work was an experiment.'³⁶

The home at Belleville was a large one but no mention is made of the children being placed into small groups. It was not intended to be a permanent home for them. It was referred to as a 'distributing home' and the object was to prepare the children in as short a time as possible to be placed in a work situation or adopted. Macpherson remarked on the work done by Dr Wichern saying his 'Rauhe Haus institution is like a village of families'³⁷. This she believed would be the ideal way of caring for huge numbers of children; because children herded together in large numbers made the establishment become like a barracks where individual care was impossible. That children only grow mentally, physically and spiritually in a loving family situation was her belief. She did not, however, intend to provide this kind of family care herself. So for the children brought from England her first concern was to find families who would look after them as though they were their own. Whether this was always the case or not will become clearer upon further investigation. Everyone who

³⁴ Lowe, p.18.

³⁵ Birt, p.37.

³⁶ Lowe, p.23.

³⁷ Lowe, p.22.

applied to take one of the children had to supply two references, and they had to sign a legal contract, which stipulated the way the child should be treated and the wages they would receive.³⁸ No copies of these documents have survived.

Whilst in Canada Macpherson travelled around the country giving talks about the conditions from which the children had been rescued. She found that there were more people willing to take them in than there were children available at that time. She believed that the children must be carefully supervised all the time and that they must not be left to their own devices, otherwise the training and teaching they had been given would be useless. She also sent out a plea to other organisations involved in emigrating children asking that they all carry out proper supervision of the children after they had been placed in situations. She said it 'would be easy to set the little emigrant adrift' and 'let him paddle his own canoe on the ocean of life' but that this was not the way she wished to work. Her aim was to act in *loco parentis* to the children and give them a home in Canada where they could be cared for until they were ready to be placed in a work situation, or to be adopted. It was also to be a place they could come back to and find a welcome. They would not be just 'emigration agents'.³⁹ These were high ideals but very difficult to carry out and as has already been stated lack of supervision was the biggest criticism made by Doyle. Canada is a huge country compared to England so the distances involved, the severe winters and difficulties of travel would have made the task extremely difficult. It would seem that the child savers themselves did not fully appreciate the problems inherent in supervising children in a country so much larger than their own.

³⁸ Birt, p.40.

³⁹ Birt, p.70.

In July 1870 a second party of seventy boys arrived in Canada accompanied by Joseph Merry, Macpherson's brother-in-law. These boys were prepared in rather more of a hurry than had previously been thought desirable. However their outfits were made, the money was raised and the boys were given the teaching necessary to 'soften their manners'.⁴⁰ Merry was to take the boys straight to the distributing home in Belleville where they would be given further training before being found situations. The next task for the workers at the Home of Industry was to prepare a party of girls because Macpherson had written to say that many Canadian ladies were willing to take girls. When Merry arrived in Canada, Macpherson returned to England but soon after her arrival she was ready with her sister Louisa Birt to take another party of over a hundred children to Canada. This party travelled straight to the Home in Belleville arriving late at night and Macpherson recorded two scenes which remained in her mind. The first was seeing the 'long procession of the tired and weary little travellers' on arrival standing in front of the home in the moonlight and singing a hymn of praise, and the second was waking in the morning and seeing all the children running around outside enjoying the freedom. They were, she said, 'like little wild animals let loose from a cage.'⁴¹

Bilbrough oversaw the Marchmont Home at Belleville and she kept Macpherson informed by letter, copies of which have been preserved in promotional material. In the promotional leaflets Macpherson signed herself 'a pleader for little children'.⁴² There are many little day-to-day details recorded; for example, the cow which gave almost more thick creamy milk than they could drink; a boy who had run away and

⁴⁰ Lowe, p.18.

⁴¹ Lowe, p.19.

⁴² Marchmont History Book (LUSCA D239/J3/3/1A) [from a leaflet in said book entitled 'Occasional papers on Emigration, Canada for the children of poor folk' no.11, Feb.1871, p.3).

been resettled; a girl who had been ill; a boy who had died. Bilbrough asked that the shirts that were sent for the boys might be flannel ones; that the boys should not be given corduroy trousers to wear because no one in Canada wore this type and so the boys were identified immediately as coming from the home. She also asked for as many 'woollen comforters, mits, (sic) socks and stockings' as could be sent.⁴³ She gave details of the arrival of a party of boys. They had a 'refreshing wash (a large row of tubs on a form outside ...)' which was followed by a 'good breakfast of tea and *new milk*, bread, and butter'. The boys then unpacked, some wrote letters and others collected all the shirts that had been worn on the voyage and washed them. She said 'soon the paling around was adorned'.⁴⁴ This gives a vivid picture of washing out to dry; it also tells of the self-sufficiency of the boys. They ate in a large room which led off the kitchen and slept in hammocks in the room above.

Bilbrough also discussed the naming of the home as 'The Distributing Home'. She said that at first she only very reluctantly agreed to this name; but she then became convinced that it was right and an 'excellent name'. Her first idea was that the children would be 'gathered in' and sent to Canada where they would be trained for the work they were going to do. However she had come to the conclusion that they must be trained in England because the people of Canada were so willing to take the children that she said they 'could not refuse comfortable homes' on the grounds that they were being trained.⁴⁵ She also went on to say something about the training they should receive in England before emigrating. Both boys and girls should be strong and willing and not afraid of hard work. They should be ready to learn. The girls would be expected to '*wash*, milk, bake, [and] cook'. She said 'everything is so

⁴³ Marchmont History Book (LUSCA D239/J3/3/1A) [from above leaflet p.3].

⁴⁴ Marchmont History Book (LUSCA D239/J3/3/1A), p.281 [from above leaflet p.2].

⁴⁵ Marchmont History book (LUSCA D239/J3/3/1A), p.281 [from above leaflet p.2].

different here – no fireplaces to clean, no mangles, everything ironed, seldom more than one servant kept, and a good deal of cooking, so the work is really hard even though the mistress helps.’ It is obvious that they would need to have fires so it is possible that the reference to not having a fireplace to clean refers to the black-leaded grates in many houses in England. The girls should also be used to getting up early in the morning because most people were up at five in order to give the men their breakfast before they went out into the fields. Bilbrough said she had come to the conclusion that:

the training and selection is most important, as each character is judged and weighed up most carefully. What a boy is naturally, he seems to continue till changed by grace; those who are idle, and not fond of work, don’t seem to get on here.⁴⁶

The implication here is that when there is a change in the child’s life, and they have been converted to Christianity, they will then not be idle but will make the most of the chance that has been given to them.

Macpherson travelled many times to Canada with parties of children and on each journey she gave her charges Christian instruction and encouraged them to pray. In her letters she wrote of services held and of the children praying, sometimes in thanksgiving for averted disaster.⁴⁷ After arriving in Canada with more children, Macpherson would go to visit some of those who had come previously. She said she was always pleased to see how well and happy they were. She commented on the abundance of fresh food and the beautiful countryside. The children were settled over a wide area and so many miles had to be travelled. As Macpherson moved from place

⁴⁶ Marchmont History Book (LUSCA D239/J3/3/1A), p.281 [from above leaflet p.2].

⁴⁷ Lowe, pp.17, 55, 56, 67.

to place she stayed with friends in order to reach as many of the children as she could. With her she took tracts and religious books brought from England and these she gave to anyone she met – even travellers on the road. She also always had a word of prayer with each child before leaving them.⁴⁸ One family settlement she visited had taken three of the young immigrants. The eldest was employed in farm work and the two younger children, one of whom had been a matchbox maker, had been adopted by a ‘venerable couple’ who were over eighty years of age. They had thirty grandchildren and six great-grandchildren of their own but felt they were still able to take in and care for the children from England. Macpherson remarked on the change the fresh air had made to the children and how healthy they now looked.⁴⁹ It would seem to be an unusual situation for such an old couple to be left with two young children. However the record stated that it was a family settlement so it is to be presumed that there would be other younger people who also had the care of them.

Often children from the same family were not kept together as the story of two sisters made clear. The two girls were very young. Their parents had both died and with their two older sisters they were taken into the Home of Industry. The two younger girls were taken out to Canada and settled with families who lived some distance apart. The younger girl had a lisp and the family who had taken her soon rejected her and brought her back to the home at Belleville. The reason they gave was that their own children were beginning to copy her lisp in their speech. Almost immediately she was settled with another family, and when checks were made it became clear that she would now be living on a farm next to where her sister had been placed. The

⁴⁸ Lowe, p.20.

⁴⁹ Lowe, p.23.

joyful reunion of the two sisters in Church on the following Sunday was related to Macpherson in the form of a very moving poem, four verses of which follow:

A pleasant home for each was found,

But far apart they lay;

And thus apart the sisters dwelt

While long months rolled away.

Poor little girls! 'twas very sad;

They were too young to write;

And no one guessed the quiet tears

Poor Annie shed at night.

[...]

A sudden cry ran through the church

A cry of rapture wild;

And starting from her seat we saw

Our quiet English child.

“Sister! my sister!” was the cry

That through the silence rung,

As round the little stranger's neck

Her eager arms she flung.⁵⁰

This again shows the use emotive language was put to in the pursuit of promoting the work of emigrating children. A sad story with a happy ending is always good publicity.

⁵⁰ Lowe, pp.24-25.

Macpherson was asked to take some children to Western Canada, to an area where many Scottish emigrants had settled some time previously. She took a party of twenty boys and found herself very much at home in the countryside there. It was, she said, 'very pleasing to a Scotch eye'.⁵¹ Stopping on the way at various places and seeing some of the boys settled, they eventually reached an area nine miles beyond the end of the railway. She was overwhelmed by the generosity of the people and said that hundreds more boys could be settled in that area of the land. She said her heart was ready to break when she saw the plenty all around her and thought of the starving people at home.⁵²

The demand for children was great and soon it was decided that more distributing homes were needed in order to keep track of all the children. One was opened in Galt, Ontario and then one in Knowlton. In April 1872 a party of thirty older boys arrived and in June 150 children were divided between the three homes now in operation.⁵³ There was so much interest in taking the children that they were not expected to stay in any of the homes for very long. They were just what it said – distributing homes. The Rev Christopher of Oxford visited all three homes in 1872 and in his report he said that about a thousand boys and girls had been brought or sent out by Macpherson during the previous three years. He seemed very impressed by the scale of the operation and by the fact that children were not allowed to go to a home unless the householder brought a reference from his minister. Christopher reported that most children who were aged less than nine years were adopted by families to be brought up as their own. He commented on the behaviour of those children who were still living in the three distributing homes. They were, he said, 'healthy, and happy,

⁵¹ Lowe, p.29.

⁵² Lowe, p.30.

⁵³ Lowe, p.39.

and ready for work.’⁵⁴ His visit had taken ‘the Lady Superintendent, Miss Bilbrough, by surprise’;⁵⁵ so it would seem that he found no fault with the care of the children and the running of the homes even though he was not expected. In May 1873 Macpherson took yet another party and in her letter to England she wrote ‘We are about to land with our 1520th child, our twelfth voyage, without a storm.’⁵⁶ This was by any standards an astonishing number of children to transplant from poverty in England to what, it was hoped, would be a better life in Canada.

The record book 1870-71, for the Marchmont Home gives details of 494 children.⁵⁷ There is a page for each child; some are quite detailed whilst others are short. An attempt at visiting was obviously made, especially in the early years of the 1870s. The reports are in different handwritings, leading to the assumption that many different people were involved in visiting. Some of the reports were written after a child had visited the home for one reason or another, whilst some relied on information received in letters. There is little information about the background or parentage of the children. Perhaps it was thought unnecessary and only details of their future life mattered. There is no information about whether adoption took place or what wages were paid if not. On many of the pages there is a photograph of the child, usually taken after they had settled in their new life; some are quite grown up. It was expected that the children would be allowed to go to school and there are reports of children being moved if this was not so. Most of the children could only go to school for part of the year. For the boys this was in the winter when there was not as much work to do on the farms. One girl said that she could only go to school and

⁵⁴ Lowe, p.41.

⁵⁵ Lowe, p.40.

⁵⁶ Lowe, p.42.

⁵⁷ Marchmont History Book, Vol.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1).

church in the summer because the snow was too deep in the winter. Some of the records have 'dead' written across the bottom of the page; sometimes, of course, it was after they had become adults. In these instances the writer of the report seemed to find comfort if it could be written that the child or adult had become a Christian.

Over the next few years Macpherson was instrumental in overseeing the emigration of a large number of children and young people. In each group there were a number of children from various workhouses. An analysis of the fifth party, taken in June 1871, gives these statistics for the children under the age of sixteen:

- 42 from a workhouse
- 1 from Dr. Guthrie's school (a Scottish reformatory/industrial school)
- 13 destitute
- 27 no information given

The party was then made up of ten young men over the age of seventeen and two women, one of whom had two young daughters with her. It was a mixed group with the youngest boy and girl being six and seven respectively.⁵⁸

Although quite a number who emigrated to Canada were mid to late teens there were also some very young children. For example, there were sisters three, five and seven years, a brother and sister four and three years and two brothers six and seven years old. Were siblings kept together? Were young children always adopted? These questions are not easily answered. As I demonstrated earlier it would not seem to be the general policy to ensure brothers and sisters were able to keep close contact.

⁵⁸ Marchmont History Book, Vol.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1).

The three little families mentioned above will be a useful example. In August 1870 the two brothers aged six and seven were emigrated to Canada. Their record stated, 'two darling little brothers, been sometime in the refuge, mother dead and father deserted them, unable to get work'.⁵⁹ On arrival in Canada they were adopted into the same family and both stayed in this place until they were adults. Their records show that they were visited and a check kept on their progress. The elder boy was intelligent and did well at school. His record finished in 1883 when he would be about twenty years of age. By this time he was living in the town and 'getting on well with his studies' and hoped to earn his living 'by good education.' It also stated that he often called at the Marchmont home to see them. The younger boy was not clever at school but quite early in life showed an aptitude for farming. His record finished in 1880 when he would be about sixteen years of age. The report of 1879 stated that he left home briefly but soon returned and said he hoped to earn his living on the farm. This would appear to be a success story.⁶⁰ For some of the children, those they were able to keep in touch with, their future life was recorded in a separate book containing photographs and newspaper cuttings. Of the above two boys the record shows that they both did well. One was recorded as belonging to the Methodist church, however unfortunately he died in 1901 of pneumonia. Of the other it was said that he had written in 1898 to say he was 'savingly converted', the comment 'Praise God' is added.⁶¹

A brother and sister aged four and three, with no details of their English background, were also placed together in Canada. They were said to be in 'an excellent home'. However it does not state whether or not they were adopted. It would seem that they

⁵⁹ Spitalfields History Book, No.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/4).

⁶⁰ Marchmont History Book Vol.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1).

⁶¹ Marchmont History Book (LUSCA, D239/J3/3/1A).

probably were not, because in 1878 it is written about the girl, 'Still in first home – sits at table – attends school regularly – not very dependable'. The reference to sitting at the table usually meant that a girl had been taken on as a maid but was allowed to sit with the family for meals. In the beginning the children were visited nearly every year but from 1879 the only contact was that a Christmas card was sent. In 1874 a letter was received at the Marchmont home to say the children were becoming unmanageable and would have to be sent back. However they must have been given another chance because they were still in the same place four years later. In 1882 a letter of sympathy was sent with the Christmas card to both children: there is no reason given for this. Also at this time there was a query about their mother's address which was not sent until the following year. The last record for the boy was in 1883 when he was asked to send a photograph of himself and his sister. The last record for the girl stated 'Last heard of at Galt Home'. In 1883 the boy would be about seventeen and the girl about sixteen. Since there are no records of them after this it would appear they were then left to fend for themselves. The girl had obviously left the placement because of the reference to her being seen at the home in Galt. Also if the letter of sympathy referred to the death of the person with whom they had been placed there would have been no one to be responsible for them.⁶²

The third example is of three sisters aged seven, five and three years. Their mother and a baby sibling had died in the workhouse, and of their father it was written, 'Father a blacksmith drinks'. The sisters had been deserted. On arrival in Canada they were sent to separate placements and were not adopted. The eldest girl stayed in the same place until 1883 when she would be about twenty years old. She was

⁶² Marchmont History Book Vol.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA, D239/J3/1/1).

reported on each year and appeared to be satisfactory. In the early years it was found that she was not attending school and the authorities from Marchmont home decided to remove her but her mistress asked for her to stay and agreed to send her to school. It was also written that she attended Church and Sunday school. The second girl did not fare quite so well. Even though she was only five she was not adopted because the report of 1879 stated that she was a great help to her mistress. However as time went on she became more and more unhappy. In 1880 she reported that she was expected to work too hard. The reason for this was that her mistress had had three children since she went to live there. The last report in 1881 stated 'has become dissatisfied wants to change would not be advised otherwise so is to return to Marchmont.' After this there is the comment that she went to see her elder sister, so they must have been in the same area. The youngest girl would seem to have had a very unhappy time. In total she had six placements. Her record is difficult to follow because she did not stay anywhere for very long. Her first placement lasted one year because she was 'troublesome'. In 1873 she was placed with her eldest sister but in 1875 this broke down because the mistress became ill. The girls were separated again. Her next placement did not work out either because she was too 'lively and boisterous for the old lady to manage'. At only eight years old and after four placements she was returned to Marchmont house in 1876. She was again placed out and in 1881 her report stated that she had been three or four years in her present place but was 'just as queer in ways as ever. Uses rough language her worst fault is absolute disobedience so is with rough people but none other will keep her'. The last report on her when she had again moved was in 1883 and she was reported as still very unsettled and difficult to manage. She had written to a sister in England but had

not had a reply.⁶³ This is a very tragic record. All of the girls were very young to be taken so far away and it would surely have helped them if they could have at least had the comfort of each other to help to take away the strangeness. The three year old obviously needed stability and someone who would understand and cope with the problems inherent in caring for so young a child who had been taken away from everything she had ever known. There is nothing in the records to suggest that Macpherson or her helpers felt that it was imperative that siblings remain in close contact.

Quite a number of the children moved from place to place and according to the records this often seemed to be at their own initiative. This would indicate that they were not under contract to stay for a given period of time. For example: a boy whose first record is September 1871 left his first placement due to ill treatment. He was visited in 1872 at his second placement and seemed to be giving satisfaction. Over the next two years he moved twice and in 1875 the report stated he was in a good place and would be able to attend school in the winter. However, over the next few years he moved to several places not settling long anywhere. He had a brother also in Canada and the last record was in January when it was reported that he went to visit his brother and that he had asked for his clothes to be sent on. He would be seventeen or eighteen by this time. What happened then is not recorded.⁶⁴

An example of a brother and sister aged seven and six respectively show two sides to the story of emigration. Their father had deserted the family and their mother was a servant in the workhouse. At first the boy was reported to be mischievous but doing

⁶³ Spitalfields History Book No.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/4) and Marchmont History Book Vol.1 (LUSCA ref.D239/J3/1/1).

⁶⁴ Marchmont History Book, Vol.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1).

well. There were reports on him until 1884 but they were not regular and were rather disjointed. At first he was said to be well settled and then there was a gap of six years between reports. The reason for this it was stated was that the man he was placed with had moved. The next report records that he had written to say he was being ill-treated and in 1882 he visited his sister whom he had not seen for twelve years. He asked about some money that he said had been left to him and his sister, by a relative in England. This must have been investigated because the report stated that the solicitor wrote to say there was no record of these young people being left any money. In 1884 he wrote asking for his mother's address. The last report stated that he had died in 1890. The sister of this boy appeared to have settled well. The reports from 1871 to 1885 all say she was in the same place and that she was well and happy. She wrote to Miss Bilbrough saying that she went to Church. She appeared to have kept in touch by letter and in 1903 she told of her sadness at her brother's death and said she was learning a trade. Finally she wrote after she was married and had a child of her own and asked if she could have a little girl to bring up with her own little boy. There is no record to say if this was done.⁶⁵

A record showing that attempts were made to make sure the children were cared for can be found in the case of three brothers. The eldest was twenty-one, the second fifteen and the youngest only seven. The eldest boy went into farming and from the accounts did well. The second boy was visited in 1870, 1871, 1874 and 1875, by which time he would be twenty years old. His first placement had broken down but after that he seemed to progress well becoming a shoemaker with his own business. He wrote at one point to ask for the address of his mother and sisters and in 1887 he

⁶⁵ Marchmont History Book, Vol.1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1).

visited Marchmont with his new wife. It is recorded they were given a Bible. The youngest boy was adopted but in 1871 it was reported that he was being ill treated. Miss Bilborough drove to his placement, found the reports were true and 'brought him home at once'. He was moved to another situation where it was said he was very comfortable. However he was not able to go to Church or school so he was to be moved again. His record of March 1876 stated he returned to Marchmont because although he liked his placement he was of a 'moving disposition'. From then on he would have appeared to move around working on farms but was troubled with 'sore eyes'. In 1881 he was visited in hospital, where he was having treatment on his eyes, and the report stated that he was again being treated for the complaint the following year. At this point he wrote to ask for his brother's address which was sent to him.⁶⁶

The settling of so many children could never have gone smoothly for everyone. There would always be some who were unhappy for various reasons. Perhaps they did not like the work or were homesick. Maybe they had personality clashes with their employer or were overworked. Perhaps they resented giving up the independence they had when they were living on the streets. When boys ran away they were sometimes caught by the police and taken back to the distributing home. Although an effort was made to find out where the problems lay, it would appear that they were expected to be grateful for the opportunity given to them. Macpherson told of one boy who had twice run away and been brought back by the police as homeless. He was described as 'self-willed' and it was said he was unwilling to go to school. He was taken back to his employer so that they could both air their grievances and where it was then hoped that a solution could be found. Macpherson stated:

⁶⁶ Marchmont History Book, Vol. 1 1870-1871 (LUSCA D239/J3/1/1).

A boy that does not value the opportunities afforded him, but prefers growing up in ignorance, must suffer for it sooner or later. May all boys who read this determine to apply themselves to every lesson heartily; and each difficulty overcome will render it more easy to master the next.⁶⁷

However, when this particular boy was returned to his employer promising to settle down and be obedient, he ran away again the same night. This time he was taken in by a ferry-man who recognised his clothing as belonging to one of 'Miss Macpherson's boys'. It was agreed that he should stay there with the hope that he would learn to read and write and also be trained in 'honest industry.'⁶⁸

At the other end of the scale Macpherson told of a boy who came back to the Home one evening and on admittance said that he had been given some holiday by his employer and that he had come home to see his friends. He was one of the first hundred boys who had been taken to Canada and he had worked hard. For the first year he worked only for his food and lodging but he had proved himself so useful that he was paid six dollars a month from which he had bought himself some small items and had also saved enough to give back to the Home his passage money. When a child did this they were presented with a 'neatly framed and beautifully illuminated discharge, to hang up' which showed that they were no longer a 'poor emigrant'⁶⁹.

As well as the problems with the children, tragedy also struck the Marchmont Home at Belleville when it burnt to the ground twice. The first time in January 1872 was in the middle of the night in the depths of winter when the temperature outside was

⁶⁷ Lowe, p.30.

⁶⁸ Lowe, p.31.

⁶⁹ Lowe, p.31.

‘about twelve or fifteen degrees below zero’.⁷⁰ A six-year old boy died in the fire. He had been carried out and had been seen to run with the others but in the confusion and smoke had somehow made his way back in at the front door. Since going to Canada he had lived at Marchmont house and on his page in the record book all it said of him was ‘a happy little man, who can say little or nothing about himself.’⁷¹ The fire seemed to have started in the wood shed but no reason for it could be found. Unfortunately everything, clothes, personal possessions, furniture and all records and papers were lost. The people of Belleville were very kind donating money, clothing, and somewhere for everyone to stay. In February 1872 the town council provided another house rent-free and almost enough money had been donated to furnish it. When the news of the fire spread around other areas of Canada money poured in to help with setting up the new home.⁷² In 1875 the home at Belleville was again destroyed by fire. This time also, through the generosity of the neighbours, the children and staff were cared for until another home was procured.⁷³

In the early years the children were taken to whichever of the three Canadian homes had room but after a while it was decided that the London children would go to the home at Galt, the Liverpool children to the Knowlton home and the Scottish children to the Belleville home. This was because in the meantime sheltering homes had been opened in Liverpool and Edinburgh where children were taken in and prepared for emigration.⁷⁴ Workers were still needed by many Canadians living in outlying places; often their own children moved to the towns and cities causing a shortage of labour on the farms.

⁷⁰ Lowe, p.34.

⁷¹ Lowe, p.35.

⁷² Lowe, p.37.

⁷³ Lowe, p.55.

⁷⁴ Birt, p.78.

In 1913 Lillian Birt gathered some statistics together and published a table giving details of the children from the Knowlton distributing home, which in the later years mainly took children from Liverpool. The table shows that during the period 1872–1912, 4858 were placed out either for adoption or employment:

- 1004 complete adoptions of children under nine years of age
- 1358 children between the ages of nine and twelve placed with the proviso they were given board, clothes and school until the age of fourteen or sixteen
- 2178 children between the ages of twelve and eighteen who were placed with the proviso they were given some schooling and a wage
- 318 over the age of eighteen who were taken out and helped to find employment

Details of their life:

- 678 recorded marriages
- 142 recorded deaths
- 69 were returned to England ‘on account of character’
- 7 sentenced to imprisonment, none for a more serious offence than theft⁷⁵

If these figures are accurate then it is remarkable that such a small percentage were returned to England or sent to prison. However there are no statistics showing the percentage number of children who made a good life for themselves. No figures showing how many were happy and how many were dissatisfied and unhappy about being taken from their home country.

Macpherson did not escape criticism in the Government report written by Andrew Doyle in 1875. Doyle’s main concern was with the pauper children from the

⁷⁵ Birt, p.246.

workhouses. As already stated he did not agree with the two classes of children being mixed because he believed that the street children had an unhealthy influence on the pauper children. He was a firm believer in the workhouse system, believing that the children had a more moral upbringing and were educated to a good basic standard. This attitude was however, not one taken by many people of the time. Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* is an example of how the system was perceived by many, and there was a great fear of having to enter the workhouse. Of course, one of the reasons was that families were separated as soon as they entered. Charlotte Sharman, as already noted, told of women who, when dying, begged her to take the children so that they would not have to go to the workhouse.⁷⁶

Doyle criticised the sleeping arrangements at the homes at Knowlton and Belleville, saying that 'fixed wooden guard-beds one placed above the other' was a 'very objectionable arrangement'. Boys as well as girls were accepted into the homes but although they had separate bedrooms they were not otherwise kept apart:⁷⁷ this they would have been in a Workhouse. The attic room, set aside for children who were ill, was criticised because only a partition separated the boys from the girls. Also there was no provision for the care of children with an infectious illness. He was unhappy about the washing facilities which, for the large number accommodated at any one time, did not reach 'the official requirements of an ordinary English workhouse.'⁷⁸ He criticised the fact that the children were sent out to their placements almost as soon as they arrived in Canada. The children, he felt, could not be well assessed in order to find the right placement for them in so short a time. The lack of adequate

⁷⁶ Marguerite Williams, *Charlotte Sharman: The Romance of a Great Faith* [with a portrait and a foreword by J.C. Carlile] (London: The Religious Tract Society, c1931), p.28 and p.111.

⁷⁷ Andrew Doyle, 'Emigration of Pauper Children to Canada' Report to the Local Government Board (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1875), p.8.

⁷⁸ Doyle, p.8.

supervision once a child was placed also came under criticism. He did, however, praise the work of Miss Bilbrough at the Belleville home in the placing out of children for adoption. She had, he said, 'rare gifts' in this work.⁷⁹

Although in the report he often wrote of the two women together, for the most part the evidence he gave refers to the children taken out by Rye. He did give one instance of a girl who had a complaint against Macpherson. She had not settled in any of the placements to which she had been sent and she felt she was badly treated when she was returned to Marchmont. It had never been a 'home' to her, she said, and she wished she had never left England. Her main complaint was of the things that were said to her. 'I was not going to be told that I was glad to come to Canada, for I was half starved, and was picked off the streets in London, and my parents were drunkards.'⁸⁰ She was obviously a feisty girl and expected to be treated properly with some consideration. This was something which she felt she did not get, either from the people who employed her, or from Macpherson and her staff when she returned to Marchmont. The attitude she described would appear to be not uncommon and it showed a total lack of thought for the children's feelings.

Macpherson's finances were scrutinised, although without the relevant balance sheets and the time to perform a proper audit Doyle felt he was not able to give a complete report. He made calculations from the figures he had and deduced that it did not cost as much to emigrate a child as was being received. However he reiterated his complaint that he had not been supplied with sufficient information. One criticism he made of Macpherson was that she encouraged the children to save and pay back their

⁷⁹ Doyle, p.19.

⁸⁰ Doyle, p.25.

passage money. She had from the start invited the children to repay the cost of emigration in order that she might bring out more children. Although Doyle attributed the best of motives to Macpherson, he felt she did it in order to enlist the support of the children for her scheme. He also said he had been told by employers that this was a hardship for many of the children. The pauper children were paid for by the Guardians of the workhouses and the children knew this, so would feel it to be a double hardship. He believed the practice should be stopped and it should be left to the children to contribute in the future if they felt they wanted to.⁸¹

By 1883 worries about the adequate supervision of the emigrated children were still rumbling around. In April of that year a letter written to *The Times* by Mr William Tallack called for more safeguards for the children.⁸² Macpherson replied, giving details of the after care given to the children emigrated by her organisation. She said they were 'caretakers of the children', indeed 'parents' to them. They had three homes, the second two each 200 miles on either side of the first. This made it easier to keep contact with the children even though there were great difficulties with both the climate and the distances involved. Each child was visited and if the conditions under which they were living did not come up to the standard imposed when the child was placed, he or she was removed. There were, she said, many reasons why a child might be removed; 'over-work, inadequate remuneration, want of kindness, and insufficient schooling.' Over 6000 children had been placed out during the thirteen years the scheme had been in existence and the supervisors reported on them yearly. She went on to say that many of the homes where people were willing to adopt children were now full but that the older children were still needed as 'servants'. She

⁸¹ Doyle, p.34.

⁸² *The Times* 18th April 1883 p.4 col.c.

stated they were taking more care than ever when placing out the children and she criticised the way some of the other agencies were working. She finished by saying:

It would be well if those who are urging the wholesale emigration of the pauper children from our workhouses would inquire first of the Canadian Government if they are prepared to receive them, for as children of the State they must have inspectors to report them again to their several Boards of Guardians, and supervising homes throughout the Dominion to receive them should they prove to have been injudiciously placed.'⁸³

Maria Rye, as I have earlier stated, was quick to respond to this letter which she obviously took to be aimed at her organisation and her work with the pauper girls of England. She replied by saying how grateful she was 'to so grand a country as Canada for our welcome and kindly treatment.'⁸⁴

Macpherson was a tireless worker. She opened the Revival Homes for destitute children; she was instrumental in founding the Home of Industry and for the first months she oversaw the work there; she took at least one party of children to Canada each year and saw them settled in a new life, travelling over 360 miles and crossing the Atlantic over 120 times; she travelled over Canada speaking at meetings to bring the plight of the children to the notice of more and more people; and she organised the oversight of the various homes. Beside all this she took a leading part in the founding of the following missions – The Strangers Rest for foreign seamen; The Sailors' Welcome home; The Scandinavian Sailors' Home; The Bridge of Hope for women; Mrs Meredith's prison mission; Classes for Jewesses; The Policemen's Christian mission; The Railway Gatekeepers' mission; the flower Mission; the open air services

⁸³ *The Times* 15th May 1883 p.8 col.e.

⁸⁴ *The Times* 23rd May 1883 p.12 col.a.

in the Bethnal Green area each Sunday; and in 1901 a Medical Mission was opened.⁸⁵ Lilian Birt recorded of Macpherson that she 'was the one to whom the gift of vision and the pioneer spirit was given, the one who could grasp principles and plan large schemes, who could devise work for others and inspire them with courage to attempt it.'⁸⁶ She had a way with words which spoke to the hearts of her listeners as she told them in graphic detail of the destitute children and asked for help in providing for them a new life. 'She was a woman of intense mother-nature, who longed passionately to save the oppressed and cruelly used children of the poor, and whose delight it was to live amongst them and spend herself for their benefit' is how Lilian Birt described her aunt.⁸⁷ Macpherson was a deeply religious person; her faith was evangelical in nature and she lived out her beliefs in everyday life. She saw the need around her and she cared deeply about those she believed to be lost, those who had no Christian faith. Macpherson believed that the answer to crime was to effect a change in the person's life. That change had to be through believing in Christ.

Of the projects that are listed above it would have been impossible for one person to be deeply involved with all of them. Macpherson would appear to have been the instigator, the one with the vision. She would then no doubt have needed to rely on other people to carry this through. She certainly travelled numerous times between England and Canada taking children. On the voyages she spent the time instructing them in Christianity and holding services and prayer meetings, both for them and the other steerage passengers. She also talked to the crew, handing out tracts wherever and whenever she could. However it does not appear that she oversaw the day-to-day routine of caring for the children either in England or in Canada. Her role was more

⁸⁵ Birt, pp.101-102.

⁸⁶ Birt, p.235.

⁸⁷ Birt, p.235.

of a public relations one, as she travelled around Canada speaking at meetings in order to interest more people in the project. Nevertheless she did at the same time visit any children who had been placed out in the vicinity. Her way with words and her use of emotive language to get her message across was very similar to the method Maria Rye used to interest people and to raise the funds necessary for the project. For the Victorians, women were the home-makers, the ones with motherly instinct and the ones whose sphere was within the home. Therefore when women spoke of these things they did so with authority. The message Macpherson gave both in England and in Canada would be heard as such and so people responded accordingly.

Macpherson's project was in many ways similar to that of Maria Rye. Both were more involved in emigration than in providing a home in England. This was very different from Stephenson whose first concern was to provide a home for the street children in England. It was also different from Sharman who also wanted to provide destitute girls with home-like care in England. They were concerned to re-create as nearly as possible the kind of family life believed by Victorian society to be the best possible way to care for children. Macpherson was also concerned to provide a family life for the children but not in a children's home. She wanted host families to take a child into their home so that they could become part of that family and so experience the care that had previously been lacking. Although many children did find a new life, as has been demonstrated, it was also a dream which did not always come true.

Chapter 12

Conclusion

Why, then, did the second half of the nineteenth century see such a growth in philanthropy associated with destitute street children? What light does the present thesis shed upon this growth in child-related philanthropy and its origins? From the evidence provided by the cases studied here, it was clearly the lifestyle, beliefs and ethos of evangelical Christians which permeated and shaped most of the initiatives – the obvious exception being the Roman Catholic homes. Nevertheless, it was the fear of children losing their Catholic heritage to the protestant faith that instigated the fast growth in the number of Catholic homes opened to care for them. In a letter to the churches Cardinal Vaughan stated that the Catholic Church should be as willing as the protestant agencies were, to care for their children. To that extent this research confirms the argument of Prochaska, Bebbington and others that evangelicalism was one of the most important sources of nineteenth century philanthropy. The most significant initiatives coming from those enthused by the expansion of evangelicalism within the Christian church. Evangelical Christians believed that the Bible was the inspired word of God. After experiencing conversion for themselves they felt the need to convert others and one way was to become involved in charitable work. Their activism was a way of following Christ's teachings to care for the sick, the poor and those in prison. This applied not only to men but also to women as the examples of Macpherson, Sharman and Rye show. Women were in many ways liberated, taking the opportunities available to become involved and to learn new skills outside their traditional home-space. Again this confirms, up to a point, Prochaska's thesis

concerning the particular role played by women in nineteenth century philanthropy. The examples considered here, however, also cast doubt upon Prochaska's further argument that evangelical women lacked certainty in relation to their own salvation. Of Sharman, it was written on her death that she was a deeply religious evangelical Christian who spoke of her faith with sincerity. Macpherson, too, was so sure of her own faith that she took every opportunity to speak of it to others. Her first priority with the children was always to teach them about Christianity.

It has already been stated that the 'city arabs', the 'gutter children', existing on what they could beg, find or steal, had been a feature of the city streets since well before the nineteenth century. They were unwanted, deserted children who crawled into whatever shelter they could find to protect themselves from the elements. Until the middle of the nineteenth century concern and care for the children who were caught up in this way of life had been spasmodic and selective. At this time however a number of young, dynamic, evangelical men arrived in London to take charge of city churches. They saw the wild uncared-for children and, using Stephenson's words their feelings were, 'Here were my poor little brothers and sisters sold to Hunger and the Devil, and I could not be free of their blood if I did not try at least to save some of them.'¹ Women too, saw the problem of poverty and the effect it had on children and their evangelical faith made it impossible for them to ignore it. The children needed care and so, as has been demonstrated in the case studies, there were women who were prepared to coordinate and head large organisations and projects. These men and women made a huge difference in the lives of a great number of children. They were intent on providing the uncared-for children with a home life, which was the

¹ William Bradfield, *The Life of Thomas Bowman Stephenson founder of The Children's Home and of the Wesley Deaconess Institute* (London: Kelly, 1913), p.78.

Victorian ideal, and saving them from a life of want and criminality. They were also intent on teaching them about Christianity, which they believed to be the way to a happy, fulfilled, healthy and moral life.

The child savers of the Catholic Church saw the same need and for many of the same reasons endeavoured to rescue the children. However one main difference here was that they were determined to save children for the Catholic faith. The Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, followed by the restoration of the Catholic Hierarchy in 1850, meant that the church was more dynamic and open, than in the years since the Reformation. The nineteenth century saw large numbers of destitute Irish Catholics come to Britain to escape starvation in their own country. They were in a poor state of health on arrival and because unemployment was high many were unable to find work and so did not survive. One consequence of this was that their children became orphans, thus swelling the number of street children as well as those in the workhouse. To reach these children, to keep them within the faith, was the aim of the Catholic child savers.

Although my thesis is a comparison of philanthropists and children's homes based in London, there were people working in many of the big cities in the British Isles at the same time, so a similar pattern can be seen in those places. There were many reasons for the need – high unemployment, no benefit system, low wages, overcrowded slum dwellings and high death rates, to name just some. For many of these reasons children were left orphaned, some ran away from cruel parents or they were deserted by parents who did not know where to turn.

The media foretold of a criminal explosion among the young. Questions were asked in Parliament and there was a fear of the unknown quantity which was the 'city arab'. An anonymous poem, 'The departure of the innocents', published in *Our Waifs and Strays*, August 1887, typifies Victorian views of the street children, and the solution of emigration which was thought by many to be the answer. The first verse is as follows:

Take them away! Take them away!
Out of the gutter, the ooze and slime,
Where the little vermin paddle and crawl,
Till they grow and ripen into crime.²

Although the poem is entitled 'The departure of the innocents', as this verse demonstrates, the children are portrayed as vermin, not as human beings and certainly not as innocent. They were something to be got rid of, dirty, uncared for, not understood and not wanted. Fortunately this was not the view of everyone. The child savers saw the potential that was being wasted and set about putting it right.

On reading the histories of the various homes, it seems at first sight that each individual child saver was overwhelmed by the sight of the children and the scale of the problem, thus bringing about the foundation of their institution. Although this is undoubtedly true it does not altogether account for the fact that so many children's homes opened in such a short space of time. Other influences were at play. Not least of these, as already stated, was the growth of evangelicalism. The philanthropists were also influenced by reading and hearing about work already being undertaken to

² Pamela Horn, *The Victorian Town Child* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997)

care for destitute children elsewhere. In each case they heard that the child savers were living by faith, trusting in God to provide the means to continue the work. This was part of the evangelical ethos and spoke directly to them. For example, before beginning her own work of child care Sharman had been greatly influenced by the work of Müller in Bristol. She arranged for children to be taken into his care both before and after opening her own orphanage. Stephenson and Macpherson were both influenced by the work of Dr Wichern with destitute boys at the Rauhe Haus in Hamburg. Rye's influence came from the work of Van Meter in America who took the 'city arabs' from New York and settled them in the west of the country. She believed this was a good solution for the street children of London. This obvious concern for children, exhibited in different parts of the world, stems I believe from changing attitudes to children and childhood. Laws were passed to limit their hours of work and education for all became the norm. Training and education instead of adult punishment for criminal children became the order of the day. Bebbington argues that for evangelicals 'the predominant idea of God changed from judge to father; the atonement was subject to reinterpretation; the incarnation came into greater prominence; and hell lost much of its power.'³ He also proposes that the age of reason was giving way to the romantic age, a change which affected the ethos of the country as a whole. These changes run parallel to the softening caring attitudes towards children.

As I have stated, the motivation of the child savers was a Christian one. If it could be written on a child's record that they had found their own faith in Christ this was the ultimate goal. Stephenson, Sharman, Macpherson and Rye were evangelical

³ David W. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: the age of Spurgeon and Moody* (Leicester: Inter Varsity Press, 2005), p.171.

Christians from four different branches of the protestant church. Muller, Spurgeon, Fegan, Barnardo, Shaftesbury, Baring Young and many of the other philanthropists briefly mentioned were also evangelical Christians. Their own faith made it impossible for them to ignore need. Cecil Walpole wrote that Stephenson ‘...believed that the religion that failed to fathom the social deeps, that glanced at the social sores and then passed by on the other side, was not the religion of Jesus Christ.’⁴ This statement could be said of all the philanthropists studied.

The Catholic Church was also motivated by Christian principles, but their concerns were more insular. Their main priority was to keep the children from losing their Catholic heritage and being taken up by Protestant child savers. Their anxiety about the ‘leakage’ from the Catholic Church was very deeply felt. This concern instigated the forming of the Crusade of Rescue which was more about keeping the children within the Catholic faith and less about the personal faith of the individual child.

The one motivation held in common was the desire to save the children, who through want and lack of Christian teaching, were in danger of becoming criminals. Rye wrote that they were ‘children whose heritage here from birth to death is sin, shame, misery, and destruction.’⁵ Rye had a further motivation: she had for many years been concerned by the unemployment situation in Britain especially for the ‘surplus women’. She believed that the children had a better chance of being employed in a country which was under-populated.

⁴ Cecil F. Walpole, *Golden Links* (London: Epworth, 1950), p.8.

⁵ Rye, Annual report 1878 (University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives, D630/1/2), p.11.

The motives of the child savers then were very similar. The children were in need and they found the means in various ways to help them. Their methods of care however, whilst having similarities, also had a number of differences. The family was an important unit in Victorian society and one aspect of care given was the provision of a home-life for the children. This was provided in a number of different ways.

Using Wichern's model, Stephenson pioneered the idea of small family groups. The families were made up of about twenty children with adults to care for them. They each had their own home-space, and even though they lived as a community, everyone was expected to respect the other families' living space. Stephenson believed that family life was the God-given way to bring up children. He therefore tried to provide this as nearly as he could. It is true to say that twenty children of the same sex between the ages of perhaps five and fifteen is not usual in a normal family, but the intention was there and the experiment given the best chance possible.

Sharman did not have the children in family groups but neither does it seem that large numbers were herded together. The first houses used would not have had huge rooms and when a purpose-built home was erected she was insistent that the rooms were not too big so that the children's individuality could be preserved. Her concern was to give the girls stability and hope for the future whilst making sure that their individual needs were catered for.

The Catholic child savers soon became involved in taking in large numbers of children. Their mission was to provide a place for all destitute Catholic children.

They therefore began building huge orphanages where the children slept in large dormitories and so only a more institutional type of regime was possible.

Although Macpherson and Rye both had receiving homes in England as well as in Canada, they were not intended for long-term residence. The English home was to shelter the children before they were emigrated and the Canadian home was used as a distributing point. As stated, the purpose of all of the child savers was to provide a home-life for the un-cared-for children. The difference was that Rye and Macpherson did not want to provide a permanent children's home themselves. Instead they were intent on settling the children with families in Canada in the hope that they would find the home-life they needed there. One of the criticisms made by Doyle was that the distributing homes were just that. The children were placed out with host families very soon after arrival before their characters, or the motivation of their hosts, could be assessed.

As the nineteenth century progressed many changes came about with regard to the education of children. Access to learning had begun to take on a higher priority than in earlier years had been thought necessary. Therefore the education of the children was considered important by all of the organisations. Stephenson, Sharman and the Catholic child savers employed teachers to provide at least a basic education.

Macpherson and Rye wrote into the remit of the host families that they should allow the children in their care to attend school. Although this was in the agreement, it was not always carried out. In many instances it was only possible at certain seasons of the year.

The Christian education of the children was also central to the agenda of all the organisations. Stephenson was a Methodist minister and so his children were brought up within the Methodist tradition. Sharman was a member of the Congregational Church and it is assumed her children would be brought up within this tradition. Certainly if a child had not been baptised, on entering the Home the minister of her church performed this rite. As already stated a Catholic education was extremely important to the Catholic child savers. Rye and Macpherson respectively, were members of the Anglican Church and Quaker movement. They believed it important that the emigrated child was settled in a Christian household. The host family had to supply a reference from the minister of their church before taking a child and it was written into the contract that they must encourage the child to attend church and Sunday school. Whether this was always followed through is not possible to trace but some evidence would suggest that it was not always so. From the records left by Stephenson, Sharman and Macpherson it can be seen that the personal, individual faith of each child was important to them. Stephenson and Macpherson always noted with satisfaction when a child, or adult who had been in their care, told them they had been saved. No such information is available from Rye because the only records kept were yearly reports which were for publicity purposes. From these it is not possible to get individual information on the children. Rye would seem to have considered the children en masse rather than individually. They were to her 'gutter children' and 'wastrel girls'. For the Catholic child savers it was a different approach they were more intent on saving for the faith than individual belief.

One of the important aspects of the work of caring for the children was to train them for future work. All of the child savers were aware that without the means to earn an

honest living the majority of them would have no other way to live except by criminal activity. The belief that destitution and criminality were linked was common and a clear motive for saving the children was to prevent them from either becoming, or from continuing to be, influenced by criminal tendencies. For the most part skills taught were limited because the children were expected to fill a lowly station in life.

Stephenson had workshops incorporated into the plans when The Children's Home moved to Bonner Road. The children were then able to learn a trade. Some of the children were taken to Edgworth and there amongst other activities the boys could be trained in farming. Girls were given training in household tasks and sewing in order that they could find positions as maids. Some of them went on to be trained to work within the Home as 'Sisters of the Children'. When they were old enough to leave they were helped to find a job and monitored for a while afterwards. If a placement broke down the situation was looked into and help given to find work elsewhere.

Sharman's girls were also taught those skills necessary to become maids. They learned fine sewing and, through experience whilst in care, how to look after young children. When they were ready to work they were helped to find a position and, according to the annual reports, carefully monitored for some years. Hard facts on this aspect however are not available. This is also the case concerning information about the training and after care of the Catholic children. Although firm evidence does not exist it is known that many of the orphanages had workshops for the purpose of teaching a trade.

Although the children were taught a trade, as has been demonstrated, there were many people unemployed in Britain. If the rescued young people were to continue on an honest path, then work had to be found for them. Emigration was considered by many to be the answer to employment problems. Canada was a young under-populated country compared to the British Isles. Other colonies had previously been investigated, for example South Africa. Shaftesbury had also put before Parliament a proposal to 'transplant' some of the 'city arabs' to Australia. The journey to Canada however took much less time, it was under-populated and workers were needed on the farms.

Emigration schemes were operated by many of the philanthropists briefly mentioned. One notable exception was Spurgeon. All the children in his care remained in England. Of the five researched in detail, Sharman was the only one who did not have an emigration policy. She believed there was enough work available for well-trained girls in the home market.

Both Rye and Macpherson set up organisations to transport thousands of children from England to Canada. There they found positions for the children as maids and farm workers. They also found people who were willing to adopt a child to be brought up as a member of their family. When the schemes were started the intention to supervise the children was in place. Unfortunately when the schemes became large this was not carried out as thoroughly as it should have been. Macpherson had a partial system in place and believed in the need for it. She spent time travelling round Canada promoting her work and she stated in her reports that she visited any children who were in the area where she was visiting. The records show that some attempt

was made to keep track of the children after they were placed out. However visits were spasmodic mainly at yearly or more intervals.

Rye would appear to have relied on the child writing if there was a problem. This was not a satisfactory answer, neither was it in many cases possible because a high proportion could neither read nor write. There is no evidence to suggest that the children were visited after they had been placed. No records on this aspect, if there were any, have survived. The most important responsibility that the organisations had towards the children was to stand in place of parents and oversee their future life. It was imperative that this trust was carried out. Unfortunately this was not so. The lack of supervision was one of the biggest criticisms made by Doyle in his report.

If it was possible Stephenson found work for the children in England and emigration was not used as a wholesale remedy. For those who went to Canada it was considered that supervision was essential and the records show that visits to the children were made each year to assess their situation. Many letters were written and visits to the Canadian branch made by the children as they grew older. The children were trained and assessed in England for two to three years before being taken to Canada. It was felt that they would then have a better chance of identifying 'with the country of their adoption'.⁶ The children in Canada were also noted for their ability to save and take care of their money. An immigration report of 1890 stated that the children from the home had 'one hundred and fifty-five individual savings bank accounts'.⁷ Although there would almost certainly be cases where the system broke down, for the most part the supervision and care would appear to have been as good as they could make it. Of

⁶ Marjorie Kohli, *The Golden Bridge: Young Immigrants to Canada, 1833-1939* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 2003), p.140.

⁷ Kohli, p.141.

course one factor in The Children's Home's favour would be that the number of children emigrated through their agency was only 3600 between 1873 and 1931⁸ compared to 30,000 by Dr Barnardo⁹ during the same period.

From the middle of the century some Catholic child savers were emigrating children in small parties. There are no details available about this aspect of the work. It was not until the end of the century that an overall organisation for the Westminster Diocese was formed. At that time the safeguards put in place to supervise the children were, on paper, very good. They had been able to learn from the mistakes of others and could see where the pitfalls were. How well they were carried out is not possible to find out. In the early years the majority of Catholic children would appear to have remained in England.

The city was believed by many to be a place of vice, especially the areas from which the children came. The countryside on the other hand was thought to be a clean wholesome place. In order to remove the children from temptation it was sometimes considered important to take them away from their old haunts and associates. The first branch outside London of The Children's Home was at Edgworth, on the Lancashire moors. Children who it was thought would benefit from severing connections with those leading them astray were moved to this home in the countryside. Sharman Homes were mainly in a small area of London but some

⁸ The United Kingdom Parliament, Select Committee on Health Minutes of Evidence 'Welfare of Former Child Migrants'

<<http://www.parliament.the-stationary-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmselect/cmhealth/7>> [accessed 4th November 2006], p.1.

⁹ Smith, M.K., 'Thomas John Barnardo ('the Doctor')', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, Last update: July 28, 2007 <<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/barnardo.htm>> [accessed 30 July 2007], p.7.

branches were opened later in the south. The Catholic homes were opened in London at first but moved to the suburbs as larger premises were needed.

Although the family unit was considered important within Victorian society, in the care of the destitute children this was often disregarded. Attention was not given to the need to preserve contact between siblings and family members. Whilst Sharman believed that it was important for sisters to be kept together, brothers were usually sent to another orphanage thus separating the family. It is recorded in the annual reports however that there was a system in place whereby relatives could visit the children on specific days. Stephenson believed that it was important for the children to maintain links with their family if possible and for those emigrating to Canada information and addresses were supplied to the families. However siblings were not necessarily kept together. For the Catholic children, although no information is available about the visiting rights of family, links were if possible maintained, if only tenuously. Even very poor Catholic families were expected to help towards the cost of keeping the child. The records do not show whether siblings were kept together. Certainly brothers and sisters would be separated because the large orphanages were single sex.

Both Rye and Macpherson believed that it was essential for the children to sever links with their old life. Rye especially believed that links should be severed with families who she considered to be disreputable. Care was not taken therefore to maintain contact with relatives. Siblings taken to Canada together, by both these agencies, were separated on arrival; some settled hundreds of miles apart. This fact alone caused many children to be homesick and enhanced the feeling of dislocation.

Sometimes when a child was adopted the adoptive family changed their name. *This* would have made it very difficult in later years when trying to trace a relative, especially if the child was too young to remember their own surname.

Whether there were more boys than girls in need of care is very difficult to establish. It could be that if a child was turned out of their home it was more likely to be a boy who it would be felt was better able to take care of himself. Or it could be that relatives were more likely to take in a girl who could make herself useful. Stephenson began his work with boys but, knowing that the problem existed for girls as well, as soon as premises allowed he took them in. The information available suggest that the Catholic child savers also concentrated on the boys first and only later on the girls. Macpherson emigrated both boys and girls, and her work in England before this had been with both sexes. Rye however was concerned mainly with girls because she *believed that there were enough organisations caring for the boys*. Sharman's Home, too, was for girls and she cared for them from infancy until *they left to go to work*. Evidence of the care made available, however, demonstrates that there were a large number of both boys and girls who were in desperate need of care.

There was also a difference in the kind of children cared for; nevertheless, all of them were destitute. Stephenson, Macpherson and the Catholic child savers rescued the street children, the 'city arabs'. Although Rye also saved some of these children, and used their situation in her promotional material, she was mainly concerned with the pauper girls from the workhouses. Sharman on the other hand took in destitute girls but not the street children. She also had a separate home especially for the children of

distressed middle class. However, through these different concerns it was possible to reach a wide spectrum of children.

To be able to save, and then care for the children money was obviously a great necessity. The evangelical child savers would not allow debt to be incurred. They prayed that God would send them what was needed to fulfil the work. They appealed for money in many different ways and then relied on God to supply what was needed, through gifts from other people. In one report Sharman demonstrated that the amount of donations increased as the number of children cared for rose; and Stephenson once wrote, 'the money invariably arrived, as soon as we could no longer do without it.'¹⁰

The Catholic child savers had a harder task because they had so many children to save and few resources with which to do it. Their remit was to save every Catholic child who was in danger of losing their religion, by destitution or being admitted into a Protestant institution. This meant the different orphanages often incurred a debt which sometimes reached substantial proportions. However as well as appeals to the Catholic public, Catholic priests also prayed for a solution to their problem and received answers.

There was one thing on which all the child savers were in agreement, there should be no election or sponsorship in order for a child to be accepted; need was the only criterion.

¹⁰ *The Children's Advocate* March 1871 (University of Liverpool, Special Collections and Archives, D.541.D2/1/1), p.1.

What did they hope to achieve and were they successful according to their own remit? They all hoped to achieve children who would grow up into good, honest citizens; people who would work for their living, be sober and thrifty. They wished to take them away from an unhealthy environment, where the only means that the children had to live was by criminal activity. They taught them about Christianity and hoped they would in turn find their own faith in Christ. There is one thing certain: they all believed that what they did was for the good of the children. Their welfare was the main concern, and everything they did was done with the best of intentions.

Although there has been much controversy in later years over some of the policies, this should not be allowed to detract from the massive effort that was made by these pioneers of child care. There has, in recent years, been an increased tendency to impose twenty-first century thinking onto actions of previous years; two examples being sexual motivation and concern over the emigration of the children. This I strongly believe can lead to mistaken conclusions. We all act in the light of the knowledge we possess and the contemporary thinking of the day. It is therefore a mistaken policy to impose twenty-first century thinking onto nineteenth century people and judge their actions through modern eyes.

There is no doubt that the lives of countless children were radically changed. The street children had nothing – they were starving, cold, ragged, and they lived by begging and stealing. The philanthropists gave them the chance to experience the care and a home-life which previously was lacking. They were given an education, taught a trade and helped to find honest work. The schemes were not without their failures. Not everyone found it a change for the better. For some the opportunity was

lost due to earlier associations, others were exploited by their employers. For some their identity was lost. Still others lost contact with their siblings and other relatives through the mistaken belief that it was right to cut off all previous contact. These latter two failings happened especially with those who went to Canada. However, even though there were many failures in the system there were also a great many successes. For these latter children the explosion of care which erupted onto the Victorian scene was a genuine life saver.

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